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Running head: HBCU RELEVANCE

Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE RELEVANCE OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Renee Felicia Dorn

June, 2013

James DellaNeve, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Renee Felicia Dorn

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

Many people describe the dissertation process as a journey. My journey has truly been an experience that I could not have completed without the assistance of so many people, and so I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends who have walked this doctoral journey with me and have given me the foundation and support to allow me to pursue my dream and achieve my goal of completion.

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## ABSTRACT

Starting in the mid-1800s, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created for the purpose of educating Black students. Since their inception, HBCUs have transformed from institutions of higher learning with a core curriculum of teaching and ministerial education serving the Black community to progressive colleges and universities that provide bachelor, master, and doctorate degrees in specialized areas of study which serve and benefit communities of all races around the world. As advanced as HBCUs have become, they still have the stigma of being less than adequate producing underachieving students. An increase in publicity of their accomplishments would help to change public perceptions, but so far they have not received a lot of positive media attention. The question that continues to be asked and is the main question of this study is whether Historically Black Colleges and Universities are still relevant.

The research design for this investigation into HBCUs is a qualitative, multi-case study using purposive sampling in the selection of 4 universities or units. HBCU alumni and associates were interviewed to discuss their views on the relevance of HBCUs and how they plan to change public perceptions. The data gathering instruments used were documents, archived records, interviews, and researcher observations, and through the examination of four unique universities, questions about their missions, demographics, academic programs, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments were researched with data collection and analysis occurring simultaneously.

The findings collected showed that the 4 HBCUs are still relevant because they serve a racially and economically diverse student body focusing on nurturing students and giving them the chance to excel in a comfortable learning environment with rigorous

and challenging academic programs that are geared to prepare them to enter the workforce and succeed. They must be proactive and disseminate positive information to the public, including alumni, which could encourage them to support their alma maters. The 4 HBCUs still have some work to do to stay progressive and provide for their students, but the need for all HBCUs to educate is still apparent, not just for African-American students, but for all students.



## Chapter 1. The Research Problem

### Introduction

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is a recognized term found in the Higher Education Act of 1965, referencing the establishment of black colleges and universities prior to 1964 (United States Department of Education [UDSOE], 2012).

These colleges and universities, also referred to as HBCUs, were created in the mid-1800s with the objective of educating Black students. During that time, Blacks were not able to get a college education at traditional or non-Black institutions of higher learning. During the years of 1607-1780, Blacks were not accepted into the nation's schools, academies, and colleges (Lovett, 2011). Actually, it was illegal in some southern states to teach Blacks how to read or write even after they had achieved their freedom from enslavement. Blacks, whether they were slaves or free, were feared and prevented from receiving equal access to education (Lovett, 2011). According to a federal report entitled *The Traditionally Black Institutions of Higher Education*:

The Black colleges were founded and evolved in an environment unlike that of any other group of colleges – one of legal segregation and isolation from the rest of higher education. The population from which these colleges drew their students lived under severe legal, educational, economic, political, and social restrictions. The origin and development of the traditionally Black institutions cannot be fully understood except in the context of the educational and socioeconomic status of the Black population.... (Hill, 1983, pp. xii-xix).

One concept that the above statement did not mention was that religion was a reckoning factor that influenced the acceptance of Blacks into higher education. New York seemed to be the location of many religious organizations that started schools which would accept Black students. The Anglican and Quaker Manumission Society opened a school welcoming Blacks in 1787 called the New York African Free School (Williams & Ashley, 2004). “The African Free School was the only city-funded Black school for many years” (Williams & Ashley, 2004, p. 9). The American Baptist Free Mission Society in New York managed a college named New York Central College which was located in a small town called McGrawville (Lovett, 2011). This was one of the first institutions of higher learning that accepted Black students, as well as women, through their doors to be educated (Lovett, 2011). Slowly more schools and colleges were opening their doors to Blacks, but not without resistance. There were many southern states that depended on Blacks for slave labor in agriculture, so educating them was not encouraged (Williams & Ashley, 2004). Laws were passed in these states to prevent Blacks from becoming educated or at least making it very difficult to receive an education (Williams & Ashley, 2004).

Despite the resistance, the religious organizations forged ahead with the opening of several schools that assisted Blacks in receiving an education. The American Missionary Association was one New York organization that created more than 500 schools and colleges for Blacks to attend. Many Historically Black Colleges and Universities were supported or founded by the American Missionary Society (Williams & Ashley, 2004). Some of them include Dillard, Fisk, Howard, and Hampton Universities, as well as Huston-Tillotson, LeMoyne-Owen, Talladega, and Tougaloo

Colleges (Williams & Ashley, 2004). Today, there are 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities located in the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and this group of institutions of higher learning not only educates Black students, but students from different backgrounds and of all races [see Appendix A] (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Non-Black institutions of higher education are now encouraging all races to attend their colleges and universities bringing diversity to the classroom, which lends to the pertinent question of whether Historically Black Colleges and Universities are still relevant.

### **Background of the Problem**

The original purpose in establishing Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and their mission was to educate Black students. However, non-Black institutions of higher education are accepting Black students in greater numbers and offering scholarships for them to attend. This has led to a debate in academia, and in the government, as to whether HBCUs are relevant today. For many years, HBCUs have garnered negative publicity regarding how their institutions are being managed (Wilson, 2011). Two sociologists from Harvard University, David Riesman and Christopher Jencks, published an article in the journal *Harvard Educational Review* discussing HBCUs in 1967 (Gasman, 2006; Jencks & Riesman, 1967; Williams & Ashley, 2004). The article criticized HBCUs and described them as academic disaster areas (Jencks & Riesman, 1967). Because the article was featured in the *Harvard Educational Review*, a well-respected journal, it received a lot of attention in academia and the press, forcing the intellectual Black community and organizations that supported HBCUs to try to save the reputation of these institutions of higher learning (Gasman, 2006).

There have been other studies that constantly question the financial stability; the rankings, compared to non-Black colleges and universities; the number of students that are matriculating and graduating; the academic quality; and the possible continuance of segregation at HBCUs (Abdul-Alim, 2011a; Minor, 2004; Reid, 2011). Some of the criticisms have focused on the quality of students attending these universities, low graduation rates, and periodic accreditation difficulties (Ali-Coleman, 2009; Reid, 2011). The presidents of these institutions of higher learning seem to be the ones who are constantly fighting the negative public perception of the institutions they lead (Gasman, 2006). In the 1960s, many newspapers began to publish articles focusing on the integration of non-Black institutions and the financial status of HBCUs completely disregarding the advances and successes they had made (Gasman, 2006). As a result of the years of down-grading the quality of these universities, some legislators have considered cutting the funding to HBCUs, merging them, combining them with non-Black institutions, or just closing them because they no longer see how they are relevant (Abdul-Alim, 2011a; Dervarics, 2011). It has been stated by members of Congress that funding should be cut to HBCUs in order to eliminate “duplicative, inefficient, and wasteful spending” so that more critical programs and services found at non-Black institutions can remain (Culpepper, 2010; Dervarics, 2011). The issue of whether HBCUs are relevant does not seem to be a new argument; today it is just a resurgence of the same argument from the 1960s and 1970s (Gasman, 2006; Williams & Ashley, 2004).

Even though the quality of HBCUs has continuously being questioned, they are still striving to educate students of all races, producing a strong workforce, and contributing to society (Reid, 2011). Several HBCUs have been commended for their

mathematical and scientific emphasis and the progress they are making in scientific, technological, engineering, and mathematical research (STEM), as well as graduating students who can contribute to society in these areas of study (Abdul-Alim, 2011b; Mann, 2011). Many other HBCUs have been recognized for developing leaders who have impacted society as entrepreneurs, government officials, military commanders, justice advocates, Nobel Prize laureates, and entertainers (Mann, 2011). HBCUs do not discriminate in admissions and are open to everyone meeting their admissions criteria. Today, most public HBCUs have significant non-Black populations (Culpepper, 2010). Even though HBCUs are a small representation of the total number of four-year institutions located throughout the United States, which is three to four percent of public and private institutions of higher education, they enroll 21 percent of Black students in college and grant 22 percent of the number of bachelor's degrees which are awarded to Black students, representing more than one-fifth of all Black undergraduates (Mann, 2011; Reid, 2011).

There have been studies showing that Blacks who attend HBCUs have demonstrated greater satisfaction, academic achievement, and developmental gains with their college experience as compared to Black students who attended non-Black institutions (Lomax, 2007; Minor, 2004). In a report by the United Negro College Fund's (UNCF) Patterson Research Institute, HBCUs are more accepting of students who come from households with annual incomes less than \$25,000, more specifically, the numbers show that HBCUs educate 42 percent of students in this economic category, and they are willing to accept SAT scores which are 20 percent lower than traditional institutions (Mann, 2011; Reid, 2011). During a time when state and national economies are in

turmoil with students who are interested in attending college, but may not have the funds to do so, HBCUs are seen as bargains for students to receive a higher education (Clark, 2009). In order for HBCUs to continue to provide an economically affordable education to students, they must receive funds outside of tuition, room, and board fees from students (Hernandez, 2010). Continued federal and state funding is challenging, so, according to Dr. John Silvanus Wilson, the former Executive Director of the White House Initiative for HBCUs in Washington, DC, the 105 recognized HBCUs should increase their publicity and share stories of success, along with solid data on their progress, in order to be competitive with the non-Black institutions that are also fighting to receive funding (Abdul-Alim, 2011c; Wilson, 2011).

During a two-day HBCU conference held in September 2011, the question of changing the mission of HBCUs was presented to those in attendance. One chancellor from North Carolina Central University, Dr. Charles Nelms, stated “The future of HBCUs will be determined by our contemporary relevance, not our historical significance. We have to lead and serve with a new kind of purpose, and, unless we do that and until we do that, our institutions will not become the institutions they are capable of becoming” (Abdul-Alim, 2011c). A live electronic survey was taken by the attendees during the conference, demonstrating that there was a difference of opinion between federal employees, who oversee funding, and HBCU employees as to whether there should be a change and a repurpose in the mission for HBCUs (Abdul-Alim, 2011c). In response to the comments about a change in the mission, one attendee stated that instead of a “repurpose” of the mission, there needs to be revamping as to how the mission should be accomplished (Abdul-Alim, 2011c). Some studies agree with the concept of

revamping the mission because HBCUs are still educating Black students, but today they are also doing so much more.

Different studies have referred to the positive and negative aspects of HBCUs and their relevance, and within the research, some issues were not addressed. The negative studies provide little concrete data supporting the removal or explaining the irrelevance of HBCUs. The reasoning has been more economic and only relying on the fact that the mission has been to educate Black students, and because non-Black institutions are now accepting students of color, then HBCUs are no longer needed. For the positive aspects, the majority of the studies mention some statistical evidence of the number of HBCU graduates each year, some of the progress certain HBCUs are making in their states to improve society, as well as the economic benefits of costing less than many traditional institutions. While HBCUs are trying to show the public how they are progressing, it is rare to hear the leaders or administrators of HBCUs discuss how these universities have progressed since their inception and how students can benefit from an HBCU education. There needs to be more dialogue explaining how HBCUs are still relevant today during a time when politicians are eager to cut spending in higher education (Dervarics, 2011; Hughes, 2011). Whether it is changing the current mission, discovering a new way to accomplish the mission, increasing positive publicity, or contacting those associated with HBCUs to explain how they are positively affecting their current students and graduates of a particular college or university, HBCUs must show how they are still relevant to society in general and not just for the purpose of educating Black students.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the relevance of HBCUs. The background and history of how HBCUs came into existence to help Black students become educated was the basis of starting these institutions of higher learning. Over many decades, these colleges and universities grew substantially in the United States. Since their beginnings, they have transformed their curriculum origins to expansive areas of study, and they have educated not only Black students, but students of all races. It is important to recognize there are those who believe HBCUs should be eliminated because their initial purpose for existing, to educate Black students, is no longer an issue since Black students are welcome to attend all colleges and universities. The public perceptions of HBCUs only helping Black students who are financially and academically inferior and other negative viewpoints that these institutions face daily are stigmas that have been viewed as subtle ways to abolish HBCUs, according to educator Dr. Benjamin Mays, in which these stigmas need to be eliminated (Williams & Ashley, 2004).

These colleges and universities have developed programs which help not only businesses and communities within the United States but international businesses and communities. The students who have graduated from HBCUs have become leaders in many different industries and professions. These positive aspects of HBCUs should be highlighted. Even though there are many supportive things to say about HBCUs, there are still some negative points that should be addressed. Some of these include the struggles that some HBCUs are currently experiencing through financial hardships, negative publicity, and a possible change in the overall mission. There are some who



believe that HBCUs should be eliminated for many different reasons, and those reasons should be explored and examined.

### **Research Questions**

For this study, the research questions are focusing on the relevance of four HBCUs that have been selected and will be examined based on their unique qualities while determining through the investigation how they are crucial to the education of all students, not just Black students.

Main Research Question: Are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) still relevant?

Supplemental Questions:

1. Does the mission of each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, need to be completely changed or revamped and modernized?
2. What are the perceptions of the brand for each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general?
3. Has the communication between the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, and the media been adequate to effectively publicize their accomplishments?
4. Has the need for HBCUs in general been reduced so that some of the existing institutions should close?
5. What are the leaders or representatives of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, doing to change the public's perceptions as to the relevance of their learning institutions?

Interview questions will be derived from these research questions and expanded to include specific perceptions of the HBCU brand in the areas of demographics;

academics; intelligence and financial stability of students; financial support from individuals, alumni, and external entities; graduation rates; and accreditation. Statistical information will be reviewed to determine enrollment, demographics, graduation rates, and financial support received by university departments evaluating whether the leaders and administrators should be concerned about these numbers.

### **Importance of the Study**

At this time, many states are considering scaling down the number of colleges and universities located in their states because of a lack of funding to sustain all of them. The comments that have been made by many politicians whose states contain HBCUs are that these institutions have low graduation rates compared to other institutions of higher learning and the classes that they are providing are duplicative to those being provided by other nearby institutions. The resolution that some legislators are trying to enact are eliminating HBCUs in their states. Some states have closed down their HBCUs, and others are looking to combine or merge the HBCUs with non-Black institutions, and essentially eliminating any HBCU status. The intent of this research is to highlight how important HBCUs are to all students, not just Blacks, and to dispel the stigma of inferiority that is being placed on them. State legislators, philanthropists, HBCUs, parents, and students should find a study about the relevance of these institutions to be educational and enlightening. The states would see how important they are to higher education, HBCUs would have a stronger basis to promote their institutions and their importance, and parents and students would see the benefit of having an HBCU education.

**Scope of the Study**

This qualitative research design is a multi-case study method using four HBCUs with unique qualities from within the United States. These four universities are considered multiple-bounded systems that were studied to determine how each one is still relevant to the advancement of higher education. Interviews of HBCU alumni and associates were conducted by asking open-ended interview questions, either by phone or in-person. In addition, existing research was reviewed on each HBCU to examine demographic and statistical information for the most recent year in which data was collected, which was 2011. Areas of focus to determine relevance in this study will be mission statements, academic programs, accreditation, demographics, graduation rates, and accomplishments. Changes and advances that have been made over time are additional ways to explain how their relevance is justified. The culture or environment of an HBCU is significant as to how students who matriculate and complete their education from these universities will eventually interact with society, socially and professionally. “A cultural and artistic legacy had come into its own during the 1920s, due in large part to the educational efforts and influence of HBCUs. That legacy would continue to expand and evolve during the coming decades” (Williams & Ashley, 2004, p. 193). Through the interviews of the alumni and associates of these institutions, as well as other representatives who are closely associated with HBCUs, the research examined how the culture of HBCUs affected the learning environment and are reflected in their graduation rates and overall accomplishments, and once again demonstrating how they are still relevant.

**Definition of Terms**

There are certain terms that will be used throughout this study and should be recognized and explained.

- *HBCU* – Historically Black Colleges and Universities – According to the amended version of the Higher Education Act of 1965, an HBCU is defined as:  
...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation.” (USDOE, 2012a, para. 1).
- *Predominantly Black Institutions* – These institutions are recognized as:  
Accredited institutions serving at least 1,000 undergraduate students at least: (1) 50% of whom are pursuing a bachelor's or associate's degree; (2) 40% of whom are Black Americans; and (3) 50% of whom are low-income or first-generation college students. This requires the spending per full-time undergraduate student of such institutions to be low in comparison to that of institutions offering similar instruction. (House of Representatives Bill 2669, 2007).
- *Significant* – “Having or expressing a meaning or having a major or important effect” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 2009a, para. 1).

- *Relevant* – “Having some sensible or logical connection with something else such as a matter being discussed or investigated or having some bearing on or importance for real-world issues, present-day events, or the current state of society” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 2009b, para. 1).
- *Critical Race Theory* – This is a discipline which was developed from a legal framework analyzing race and racism, recognizing how it is engrained in our culture and prevalent through power structures in the white culture “perpetuating the marginalization of people of color” (Creswell, 2007; UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2010, para. 2).
- *Culture* – “Shared beliefs and values of a group: the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 2009c, para. 1).

### **Limitations**

Because there are 105 HBCUs located in the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands, the four that were carefully chosen for this multiple-case study are unique in how they were established, their demographics, and their programs (USDOE, 2013). Since there are no HBCUs in the state of California, the selected four are from the Northern, Eastern, and Southern parts of the United States. Because this case study is delving into the inner-workings of HBCUs and how particular campuses have struggled, survived, changed, or kept the same values since inception, the interviews only included HBCU alumni and associates or representatives working with HBCUs explaining what they experienced, their perceptions, their concerns, and how they try to change public perceptions and show that their universities are still relevant. With the growth of HBCUs

since their inception, the criteria that were used to determine relevance were the university missions, demographics, academic programs, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments.

### **Summary**

HBCUs have an historical significance to the education of Blacks beginning in the mid-1800s. Today, that significance is being over shadowed by the question of whether HBCUs are still relevant. Through many different studies, depending on the author, HBCUs are highlighted in both positive and negative ways, but whichever way they are deemed by the public, it is necessary to understand why they are still relevant and need to become competitive in order to receive funding to survive. After the *Harvard Educational Review* article written by Jencks and Riesman was published in 1967, HBCU presidents and administrators were angry and suspicious of anyone conducting a study regarding HBCUs. According to one HBCU administrator in his response to the article:

Those of us who work in the historically Black colleges feel that we have been studied enough, too often by persons who know least about these institutions and their contributions to American Higher Education and to the American Society [sic]. The reports and writings flowing from these studies have been often hyper and unfairly critical of our institutions, showing little sensitivity and even less understanding. (Williams & Ashley, 2004, pp. 273-274).

As an alumnae of two HBCUs and someone who continues to work with the alumni of several HBCUs, this researcher's study examined how HBCUs are relevant through the use of documents and current statistical data from the four highlighted

universities; archival records; interviews of HBCU alumni, associates, and representatives closely associated with HBCUs; and observations from the researcher.

This case study should be enlightening to all supporters and skeptics of HBCUs.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **Background/History**

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created for the main purpose of educating “freed descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States” (LeMelle, 2002, p. 1) because they were excluded from attending traditional institutions of higher learning. The racism in the United States during the 1800s directly influenced how Black students were able to receive an education, and because HBCUs were a result of the discrimination in the traditional colleges and universities, the theoretical framework of this research, Critical Race Theory, lays the foundation of how HBCUs were established and examines why they continue to be relevant. Critical Race Theory, originally founded by Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams, is, in short, committed to anti-racism with the conscious effort to resolve conflicts by promoting social justice and anti-subordination (Bell, 1995). Different interpretations of this theory identify “how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of American society” (Creswell, 2007, p. 28) and focuses on three main goals: (a) giving people of color a platform to present their stories of discrimination; (b) recognizing that race is a part of society and fighting for the end of racial suppression; and (c) noticing the inequities experienced by people in other areas besides race, such as gender and class, and addressing those differences. This study reviews the second goal in Critical Race Theory, the fight to end racial suppression, and begins by recognizing that the establishment of the first HBCU was a step toward ending the suppression and exclusion of Black students from receiving an education, but the growth of HBCUs eventually led to a debate regarding the kind of education Black students should receive.



Twenty-five years before the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, Cheyney University in the state of Pennsylvania was established in 1837 and designated as the first and “oldest of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities in America” (Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, 2010, p. 1). As more HBCUs were established to educate Black students, a debate over curriculum offerings ensued wavering between industrial or vocational courses and classical liberal studies courses including religion (Gasman, Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010a; LeMelle, 2002; Peeples, 2010). Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Bunche, and other noted educators and authors have expressed different opinions on the purpose of HBCUs, their curriculum structure, and their equity to non-Black institutions. Whether training teachers, preachers, engineers, doctors, entrepreneurs or journalists, HBCUs have been able to adapt and show resilience over time regarding advancement in the majority of program offerings in their curricula (Gasman et al., 2010a).

According to the Higher Education Act of 1965, an HBCU is:

...any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation. (USDOE, 2012a, para. 1).

The recognized 105 HBCUs are located in 20 States, mostly in the south and on the east coast, including the District of Columbia, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands, serving

undergraduate and graduate students in excess of 300,000 (Gasman, Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010b; USDOE, 2013).

Before emancipation in 1860, Blacks in the United States had an illiteracy rate of approximately 95 percent (Gasman et al., 2010a). In order to educate Black students, the first objective was to work on basic literacy in all education institutions, starting with primary and secondary schools and graduating to the Black colleges (Gasman et al., 2010a). In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Land Grant College Act giving state legislatures and boards control over all of the colleges and universities that were considered normal institutions and land grant colleges created for Blacks (Gasman et al., 2010b; LeMelle, 2002; Peeples, 2010; United States House of Representatives [USHOR], 1862). By 1890, approximately 200 institutions of higher education provided education to slaves who were freed. These institutions were labeled as colleges, universities, or institutes in which the majority of them educated students starting at a primary or secondary level with a focus on basic skills because a substantial number of students entering these institutions could not read (Peeples, 2010). During the early 1900s, many of these colleges, universities, and institutes started offering a collegiate curriculum (Peeples, 2010).

The definition of *curriculum* as stated by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is “the body of courses that present the knowledge, principles, values, and skills, that are the intended consequences of the formal education offered by the college” (Carnegie, 1997, p. xi; Peeples, 2010). Many books and articles have highlighted the dilemma HBCUs encounter when creating curricula that would be appropriate to meet the needs of their students, based on an environment of racial

inequality and the question of whether there was a need for HBCUs (Gasman et al., 2010a). A Howard University professor, Ralph Bunche, who taught and studied Political Science, argued that:

The role of the HBCUs could be fully understood only when the leaders of these institutions had arrived at themselves at a ‘clear understanding of the relations of the Negro to the political and economic structure and to all groups and classes within it. (Bunche, 1936; LeMelle, 2002, p. 193).

In the 1960s, another Howard University Professor, Kenneth Clark, stated that HBCUs were “academically inferior because they reflected the cumulative inferiority of segregated education” (Clark, 1967, p. 197; LeMelle, 2002). Leading educators from HBCUs and other institutions around the country rejected Clark’s views (LeMelle, 2002). In addition to the question of whether HBCUs should exist, there was also the question of what kind of curriculum should be taught at these institutions. The debate centered on industrial, classical liberal, and general education curriculums, and it seemed that the funding source influenced the type of curriculum that was developed.

**Industrial, classical liberal, and general education curriculums.** Federal legislation, corporate donations, and individual support have substantially impacted how HBCUs have grown and advanced over the years, stimulating expansion and curriculum development (Gasman et al., 2010b). When most HBCUs were established, teaching and preaching were the primary occupations of Black men and women and the main course offerings at Black colleges (Gasman et al., 2010a; Jeter, 2002). Teaching and ministerial studies should be reviewed by looking at the social environment in which they were the main focus of education on HBCU campuses. Careers in teaching and preaching were

essentially the only professional choices available to Blacks, most notably, Black teachers were prominent professions starting in the 1870s (Gasman et al., 2010a; Jeter 2002).

Even though, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of the public and private Black colleges had an academic focus on preparing students to become teachers and ministers, this specific time in the education of Blacks had a philosophical debate over different curricular approaches that should be instituted at Black colleges and universities. The core of the debate was determining which type of curriculum would be better suited for Black students and benefit them the most, an industrial curriculum or a classical curriculum (Gasman et al., 2010a). Private HBCUs had more prominent debates over curriculum, whereas the public HBCUs, more specifically, the institutions designated as land-grant colleges were not independent or sovereign like the private HBCUs because they received support from government funding, and their curriculum was determined by the funding sources (Gasman et al., 2010a; LeMelle, 2002). Writer J.D. Anderson reported on the different perspectives that this debate fueled, stating that religious organizations and their leaders, who were primarily Black, were more likely to accept a curriculum of classical liberal arts, which was closely related to that of normal colleges and schools founded and operated by missionary societies located in the northern part of the United States (Anderson, 1988; Gasman et al., 2010a; Jeter, 2002; Peeples, 2010). On the other hand, if certain HBCUs were founded or backed by wealthy industrialists, then the curriculum of choice would be based on an industrial or practical education with the goal of creating skilled laborers (Anderson, 1988; Gasman et al., 2010a; Jeter, 2002; Peeples, 2010).

The educator and author, Booker T. Washington, favored industrial education which would allow students to use their brains and skill to focus on future occupational goals (Gasman et al., 2010a; Jeter, 2002; LeMelle, 2002; Peeples, 2010). To train students in industrial education was expensive, and many advocates of this type of curriculum were not willing to spend additional money on Blacks for them to effectively compete for skilled jobs in the South (LeMelle, 2002). W.E.B. Du Bois, the educator, author, and civil rights leader, favored classical liberal arts education stating that “work alone will not do unless inspired by the right ideals and guided by intelligence” (Du Bois, 1903/2005, p. 112; Gasman et al., 2010a, p. 74; Gasman, Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010c; LeMelle, 2002; Peeples, 2010). Financial support increased during the early 1880s from industrial philanthropists, and by 1890, some form of manual training or courses based on industrial education was part of the curricula of all Black colleges demonstrating the escalation of support given to HBCUs for the purpose of enhancing the study of industrial education (Gasman et al., 2010a, 2010c; Peeples, 2010).

In addition to industrial and classical liberal curriculum, there was also a concern about the curriculum for general education. During the beginning stages of American higher education, the general education curriculum generally consisted of a set of courses that were designed to educate men to become clergy, state leaders, and gentlemen (Dwyer, 2004; Jones, 2010). Many changes took places over the years, and despite shifting beliefs with regard to what, when, and how general education courses should be taught and administered, the mission of general education has remained essentially the same: “to cultivate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that all of us use and live by during most of our lives” (Jones, 2010; Stone & Friedman, 2002, p. 199). Because

HBCUs are responsible for educating a large number of students, especially students of color, an understanding of how HBCUs are assessing their general education curriculum can provide the higher education community with insight into what a large segment of students is learning during their college matriculation (Jones, 2010). It has also been recognized that an increased knowledge of general education assessments at HBCUs can provide both supporters and critics of HBCUs evidence as to their effectiveness in fostering student learning (Jones, 2010). For example, in Texas, general education curricula at public colleges and universities are controlled by the state educational board, whereas private colleges and universities have the autonomy to create curricula based on general education that is believed to be beneficial to the students (Jones, 2010). These debates and concerns about types of established curriculums that were monitored at HBCUs were found to be based on financial backers, supporters, and some outside societal influences.

**Influences.** External influences on the curriculum development of HBCUs have included societal effects, the government, business and industry, organizations and associations based on academics, alumni and sponsors (Peeples, 2010; Stark & Lattuca, 1997). In the past, sponsors and alumni have provided philanthropic support, which has been critical to the establishment and advancement of curriculum (Peeples, 2010; LeBlanc, 2001). For example, Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, an HBCU, used its financial support from philanthropic sources to improve the university in its entirety, but there were certain areas, such as the curriculum, which needed to be developed by changing the focus from teaching and religion to one of liberal arts (Peeples, 2010).

The increase in Black political power and shrewd Black educators in the South commanded the continued existence of HBCUs causing the improvement of their facilities and curricula (LeMelle, 2002). In the 1960s during the Civil-Rights Movement, students began to inquire as to the substantive purpose of their curriculum, requiring that it should be more in tune with how the world was changing and more relevant to the needs of Black people (LeMelle, 2002; Peeples, 2010). The students of HBCUs requested an updated curriculum, which included a Black studies program that many intellectuals considered to be the “curriculum of inclusion” (LeMelle, 2002, p. 195; Peeples, 2010). In addition to the creation of Black studies programs, some foundations donated money to HBCUs for the purpose of developing a women’s studies curriculum focusing more on community outreach and researching issues pertaining to Black women (Peeples, 2010). Curriculum not only grew from external influences such as philanthropic sources to advance specific subject matters, it also came about due to societal discrimination, social injustices, and the need to fill a void in certain occupations.

**Journalism.** Because the main focus for many HBCUs was either an industrial or a classical liberal curriculum, journalism was not an educational priority. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, very few Blacks worked at newspapers, magazines or other publications other than the Black press or church-related publications (Jeter, 2002). One student, Lucille Bluford, submitted an application to be considered for admission to the University of Missouri in their school of journalism, but to prevent Ms. Bluford from attending that particular university, a new and distinct instructional program for journalism was created by the state of Missouri at the local HBCU which was Lincoln University in 1942 (“Lucille Bluford,” 2003; Jeter, 2002). Lincoln University was the first HBCU to add

journalism as a major within their curriculum (Jeter, 2002). Twenty-five years later, in 1967, Hampton University established a mass media arts major (Jeter, 2002). Mass communication programs in the 1970s that were established at HBCUs were funded by grants from the federal government and foundations such as the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Jeter, 2002). Some of the traditional fields of study associated with mass communication are advertising, print journalism such as newspapers and magazines, public relations, mass media studies, broadcasting, cable and network television, film, and radio (Jeter, 2002). One not-for-profit organization, the Black College Communication Association (BCCA), which was established in 1990, supports HBCUs with media programs by providing them with technical assistance (BCCA, 2010; Jeter, 2002). Another organization, the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), ensures that HBCUs have journalism and mass communication programs that are accredited on their campuses (ACEJMC, 2011; Jeter, 2002). The first HBCU to receive this accreditation was Florida A&M University (FAMU) in 1982 (FAMU, 2011; Jeter, 2002). Since then, many HBCUs have included Journalism as part of their curriculums. Some notable HBCU graduates in the field of journalism are Ed Bradley and Jim Vance, who graduated from Cheyney University (ABC News, 2006; Page, 2006; Rich, 2011). Jim Vance became an anchorman receiving several Emmy Awards and later inducted into the National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame (Rich, 2011). Ed Bradley became the first Black CBS News White House Correspondent and later a News Journalist on the television program 60 Minutes. He garnered 19 Emmy Awards and received several other awards including



The Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award and the Paul White Award from the Radio and Television News Directors Association for his reports (ABC News, 2006; Page, 2006).

**Medical school.** In 1910, an educator, Abraham Flexner, who conducted a research study for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the American Medical Association, published a report which scrutinized the medical schools at many American colleges and universities and led to massive reforms in medical training (Flexner, 1910; Grasgreen, 2010). Abraham Flexner's report also prompted the closing of the majority of medical schools in rural locations and all of the medical schools at HBCUs, which were seven at the time, except for two—Meharry and Howard Universities (Flexner, 1910). In the report, Flexner stated that five of the seven Black medical schools were not in a position to contribute any value to Blacks by solving their health problems; in addition, money was being wasted by sending into the community undisciplined men who did not have the necessary training to help Blacks (Flexner, 1910). It took several decades until 1975 when another medical program was established at Morehouse College bringing another Black medical school into existence (Gasman et al., 2010a).

One HBCU located in New Orleans, Xavier University of Louisiana, has sent more Blacks to medical school than any other institution of higher education within the United States (Gasman et al., 2010a; LeBlanc, 2001). Xavier accepted many students who would otherwise have difficulty entering another college or university in order to study a pre-medicine curriculum and eventually advance to a medical school (Gasman et al., 2010a). Even though many of the students had low SAT scores as well as low grade point averages (GPAs), they were still able to successfully enter medical school and pass

board exams due to the rigorous nature of the science curriculum they received (Gasman et al., 2010a). In 2005, Xavier received the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) President's Award for Diversity through a cooperative arrangement with Tulane University's industrial hygiene program permitting Black students in the sciences to enter a master's level program and gain entry into a growing professional field (ABET, 2005). Xavier is an example for all colleges and universities showing others how to develop and nurture doctors, but HBCUs, in general, have a considerably higher acceptance rate for Blacks entering medical school (Gasman et al., 2010a). A notable HBCU engineering graduate is scientist Tyrone Porter, Ph.D., who started his college education at Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU, 2010). Dr. Porter is an assistant professor of engineering at Boston University where, in his state-of-the-art laboratory, he develops Nano carriers  $1/20^{\text{th}}$  the size of red blood cells that deliver chemotherapy drugs directly into cancerous tumors (Lantigua-Williams, 2011). His ground-breaking work can potentially revolutionize how sickle cell anemia, diabetes, and cancer are treated (Lantigua-Williams, 2011).

**Engineering.** The study of engineering began officially in 1802 in the United States when West Point Military Academy was founded, afterwards, engineering education was gradually instituted in the curriculum at HBCUs for several decades before the sanctioning of the First Morrill Act of 1862, and then it was solidified due to the Second Morrill Act in 1890 (Gasman et al., 2010a; Peeples, 2010; USHOR, 1862). In the late 1920s, accreditation in engineering was an important topic for HBCUs with their leaders believing that affiliating with an accrediting body would prove their legitimacy and ability to provide college level instruction (Peeples, 2010). In 1932, engineering

education became nationally accredited, which further established and unified how the curriculum of engineering programs were developed and structured (Peeples, 2010). Even though Blacks are significantly underrepresented in the field of engineering, HBCUs consistently produce a significant number of Black engineers (Gasman et al., 2010a). Out of the top 20 colleges and universities in the United States that award baccalaureate degrees in engineering to Blacks, nine of them are HBCUs (Gasman et al., 2010a). Between 1997 and 2006, Black colleges and universities only represented three percent of all higher education institutions, but they conferred engineering baccalaureate degrees to 20.1 to 29.4 percent of Black students, and by 2008, 16 HBCUs were recognized as having nationally accredited engineering programs (ABET, 2010; Gasman et al, 2010a).

**Entrepreneurship.** In 1970, the Office of Economic Opportunity earmarked \$7.4 million for a grant to help establish the Opportunity Funding Corporation (OFC), an organization whose main purpose is to examine different ways to attract capital from any and all sources in order to support America's disadvantaged populations (Anderson, 2010; Opportunity Funding Corporation [OFC], 2000). Dr. Mohammad Bhuiyan, a professor at Fayetteville State University, realized that one reason why there may not be a substantial number of successful Black entrepreneurs is that even with the more than 100 HBCUs in existence, only a few had entrepreneurship programs (Anderson, 2010). Dr. Bhuiyan counseled schools to reallocate resources from outdated business courses in order to integrate entrepreneurship into their standard programs (Anderson, 2010). A sociologist, Michael D. Woodard, who researched diversity in the workforce and patterns in employment, was president and CEO of Woodard and Associates, a Washington, D.C.-

based consulting firm (Anderson, 2010; Woodard, 2012). As a specialist in labor force analysis and organizational development, Woodard believed that it was imperative that HBCUs provide for their students a curriculum on entrepreneurship (Anderson, 2010; Woodard, 2012). Dr. Bhuiyan established the OFC Venture Challenge to assist HBCUs in developing curricula focused on entrepreneurship (Anderson, 2010; OFC, 2000). This is an annual competition that is held in Atlanta, and it challenges HBCU students to use the knowledge learned in their entrepreneurship courses to create sustainable and hopefully lucrative business ventures (Anderson, 2010; OFC, 2000). The conference allows the participants to be introduced to business titans heading some of the nation's multi-million and billion dollar corporations leading to possible future employment with many of OFC's top sponsors, which in the past have included Walmart, The Hershey Company, Wells Fargo, Northrop Grumman, Tiffany & Co., Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, and UPS (Anderson, 2010; OFC, 2000). In addition to the entrepreneurship curriculum, forums and seminars on development and national policy in entrepreneurship education for minorities are available for HBCU professors and deans to attend (Anderson, 2010; OFC, 2000).

Southern University, North Carolina A&T University, Spelman College, and Clark Atlanta University, are all working in conjunction with Babson College, which received from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation a \$40,000 matching grant, to create materials and resources for an entrepreneurship curriculum focusing on a teacher exchange program and minority-owned businesses (Babson, 2003). Dr. Stephen Spinelli, the director of Babson College's Arthur M. Blank Center for Entrepreneurship, stated that "The partnership is designed to create the right materials and environment to help Black

students develop their entrepreneurial thinking and skills" (Babson, 2003, p. 15).

Manager Adrian Alleyne, who oversees marketing for the center, will work with Dr. Spinelli as a co-director (Babson, 2003). "This entrepreneurial mindset can then be applied in any business venture; large or small, public or private, corporate or not-for-profit, local or global," (Babson, 2003, p. 15) Spinelli said. Another university that has helping its students learn about entrepreneurship is Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. This university has an Entrepreneurial Leadership Program that engages students in the prospect of becoming business leaders by bringing to campus and introducing to students entrepreneurs in many different business arenas on a regular basis (Cheyney, 2010).

**Graduate programs.** The graduate and professional programs located at Black colleges have evolved since the early 1900s when these programs were established by privately-controlled HBCUs. In 1915, about 38 percent of all students attending HBCUs were later admitted to professional programs at Meharry and Howard Universities in the fields of law, pharmacy, dentistry, and medicine (Gasman et al., 2010a). By 1946, public HBCUs surpassed the number of programs offering graduate-level work as compared to the private HBCUs, with education as the constant primary area of study at both public and private colleges and universities (Gasman et al., 2010a). Policies that prevented Blacks from having the opportunity to explore different occupations had lessened restrictions in the mid-1960s allowing an increase in financial support to Black colleges and their student populations resulting in a period of progression for Blacks. (Gasman et al., 2010a). With the changes in restrictions, there was an expansion of curricular offerings and programs, an increase in major selections, and an upsurge of degrees awarded at Black colleges (Gasman et al., 2010a). During the 2006–2007 academic year,

54 HBCUs offered graduate-level courses which led to a Master, Doctorate, and first professional degrees in many areas including law, dentistry, medicine, and pharmacy (Gasman et al., 2010a; USDOE, 2009). Today, higher education is transforming even more than during the repercussions of World War II, when the passage of the 1944 GI Bill of Rights Act, legislated as the Serviceman's Readjustment Act, greatly increased the number of Americans enrolled in universities (Servicemen, 1944). Most educators agree that two of the primary factors behind the current changes in higher education are the revolution in high technology and the worldwide dynamics of globalization (Gasman et al., 2010b; Marable, 2002).

**Online education.** HBCUs began using distance learning as part of their curriculum in 1981 with a project called the Black College Satellite Network (Smith, 2011). The founders of this satellite network were Dr. Mabel P. Phifer and Dr. Walter C. Barwick (Smith, 2011). Even though the satellite network itself is no longer in existence, it gave HBCUs a template to follow in providing distance learning to their students universally (Smith, 2011). As stated earlier, HBCUs have consistently educated students who might not have had the chance to attend college, so to have programs and curriculums online was imperative to expand its outreach efforts. The number of HBCUS with online degree programs is slowly growing (Beasley, 2010). One online learning management company, Education Online Services Corporation, led by Dr. Benjamin Chavis, former NAACP president, and founded by Ezell Brown, has provided support to many HBCUs interested in offering online degree programs (Smith, 2011).

In 2007, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) -Sloan National Commission on Online Learning surveyed 42 presidents and chancellors whose

colleges and universities are part of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges [NASULGC], 2007). Out of the respondents, a little more than 84 percent decided to include online education as part of their long-term strategy (Smith, 2011).

Approximately 71 percent of the member colleges view online education as a way to attract students outside of the physical location of the college or university, and almost 64 percent equate online education with an increase in student access (NASULGC, 2007; Smith, 2011). According to a study from Howard University's Digital Learning Lab, only 18 percent of the 105 HBCUs in the United States are online, compared to 66 percent of the two- and four-year institutions of higher learning that offer distance education courses at the college level (Beasley, 2010). The APLU-Sloan report provided some insight as to why online programs and curricula are not as progressive at HBCUs: approximately 78 percent of the respondents believed that in order for students to succeed, they need more discipline to complete the online courses, 70 percent thought that it would be too costly to develop online courses, and almost 60 percent found that their instructors did not readily accept the idea of teaching online (Beasley, 2010; NASULGC, 2007).

**Additional organizational influences and joint projects.** The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) was established in 1944 due to the decline in foundation support for privately-funded colleges and universities (Peeples, 2010; UNCF, 1999). UNCF was the first organization of its kind to “utilize cooperative solicitation in fundraising and seek operating funds from businesses and corporations” (Peeples, 2010, p. 254) for private HBCUs and evenly distributed the funds amongst the member schools (UNCF,

1999). Today, UNCF has a new Institute for Capacity Building (ICB) in which its goal is to assist its member HBCU schools in advancing, maintaining and stabilizing the management of their campuses (UNCF, 2010). According to Dr. Elfred Anthony Pinkard, ICB's executive director,

ICB supports UNCF's member institutions in four areas: curriculum development, recruitment and retention of faculty; maintaining solid fiscal management policies and practices; developing campus master plans to preserve historic sites and assisting campus infrastructure development; and enhancing leadership development and governance. The programs that we've outlined in ICB are programs that would benefit any college president. They're all looking to strengthen their fund-raising capacity. They're all looking to develop innovative curricula.... (Roach, 2007, p. 12).

Not only are HBCUs receiving assistance for curriculum development, they are also giving assistance to local high schools for curriculum development. Business school deans at HBCUs are partnering with corporations to devise a program for Black high school students interested in going to college (Manzo, 2004). The Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies will institute a curriculum that will prepare students for college focusing on "academic knowledge, interpersonal and human-performance skills, and business concepts" (Manzo, 2004, p. 9). This program was developed with assistance from the Education Development Center, a nonprofit research organization in Newton, Massachusetts (Manzo, 2004).



Another program that has been established was based on the 21st Annual HBCU Summer Faculty Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Workshop in Washington, D.C. (Roach, 2004). This summer workshop emphasizes to HBCU faculty and other participants the importance of integrating GIS in research and a college curriculum (Roach, 2004). GIS is defined as "computer mapping technology that allows users to link aerial photographs, images, and data to digital street networks, buildings, sidewalks and other elements of the built environment," (Roach, 2004, p. 34) according to workshop organizers. The workshop was held at the offices of the National Capital Planning Commission which arranged to have lectures on the use of GIS and state of the art applications including those for "homeland security, health, environmental management and census analysis" (Roach, 2004, p. 34). The Office of Surface Mining/Department of the Interior sponsored the workshop with the Bureau of the Census, ESRI and the U.S. Geological Survey contributing to the three-and-a-half day event (Roach, 2004).

As reported in 1992, the Administration on Aging sponsored a project for in-service development of instructional faculty at Prairie View A&M University's Nursing School (Roush, Luna, Stephenson, & Waugh, 1992). The purpose of the project was to increase the development for faculty and institutional advancement in gerontology nursing (Roush et al., 1992). Through joint efforts with three co-investigators from two community college nursing programs, a faculty member from an HBCU nursing program, and the Texas Consortium of Geriatric Education Centers (TCGEC) project staff, health professional educators brought together faculty and material resources to update, adapt, and create curriculum materials in gerontology and geriatrics for undergraduate nursing education (Roush et al., 1992). Faculty participants completed

Personal Action Plans (PAPs) describing how they would apply their knowledge in and out of the classroom, and the results of the project were disseminated to the 23 HBCUs with baccalaureate degree nursing programs in the South (Roush et al., 1992).

Prairie View A&M University also two other programs geared toward partnering with businesses and people in different industries to prepare students for the future. The first is the Honors Program, in which the goal is to produce highly trained individuals who will be able to compete for admittance in graduate programs, as well as future roles in academia, business, and professions in numerous industries throughout the United States and around the world (PVAMU Honors Program, 2009). The second program is called Students Participating in Transcendent Knowledge (S.P.I.T. Knowledge), which is a college lecture series bringing a diverse group of speakers to the campus informing students about industry options and stimulating their interests (PVAMU, 2010).

Another HBCU that has joined with other universities for scientific programs is West Virginia State University. One of the many partnerships that the university has engaged in has been named the Gus R. Douglass Institute for Agricultural, Consumer, Environmental, and Outreach Programs (WVSU, 2012). These programs are in conjunction with West Virginia State University Extension, West Virginia State University Agricultural and Environmental Research Station, and The Center for the Advancement of Science, Technology, Education, and Mathematics [CASTEM] (WVSU, 2012). Two university departments also support the programs which are the Business and Finance Department and the Communications Department (WVSU, 2012). These programs allow scientists to work with students in order to pursue research for the

purpose of improving the quality of life and the environment for the residents of West Virginia.

International programs and partnerships with HBCU students and faculty are becoming more prominent. By extending academic curricula excellence to other countries, Florida A&M University President James Ammons formally agreed to work with a Canadian organization that will allow FAMU students to participate in internships in Cairo, Egypt (Nealy, 2009). As part of other HBCU curricula, the Engineers without Borders chapter at Howard University continues to serve communities in Kenya and Brazil, and Spelman College has helped the country of Senegal by building a library for their 10,000 Girls program (Nealy, 2009).

**Financial support.** HBCUs since their inception have struggled to open their doors and to continue to keep the doors open by having a steady flow of students and funding. Today, the funding for HBCUs has dwindled to the point where politicians are starting to make decisions as to whether HBCUs should continue to exist. Walter M. Kimbrough, the president of an HBCU in Little Rock, Arkansas, Philander Smith College, has stated that the relevance of HBCUs has been debated for decades, and on his campus, socioeconomic factors are a concern with students from lower-income families having a diminished graduation rate from those of a higher socioeconomic status (Kimbrough, 2011). Kimbrough suggested that there needs to be more resources for low-income students such as funding to help them increase their graduation rates (Kimbrough, 2011). According to a former Board of Trustee member of South Carolina State University, Charles Williams, the funding sources for public institutions have been state

legislatures, and the funding that HBCUs receive are influenced by politics (Seymour, 2008).

During these hard economic times, HBCUs have to fight for state support as stated by a former chancellor of North Carolina A&T University (Seymour, 2008). Funding is not only difficult to receive from the state, but also from the federal government. In the past, the House of Representatives and the United States Senate have debated on how HBCUs should be funded (Dervarics, 1997). At one point, the House recommended an increase in HBCU funding, whereas the Senate wanted to freeze funding of HBCUs so the current levels of funding would remain the same (Dervarics, 1997). Even the White House has suggested solutions on how to fund HBCUs by increasing money given for the core undergraduate programs and maintaining the same level of funding for graduate programs (Dervarics, 1997). During the Bush Administration, the 2003 education budget plan had an increase of \$10 million for HBCU undergraduate and graduate institutions, which, according to the Secretary of Education, Dr. Roderick Paige, was one of several new initiatives to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday (Dervarics, 2002). With a 3.6 percent increase for HBCUs, the undergraduate programs would receive an additional \$7.4 million and the graduate schools an additional \$1.8 million, the plan would bring a total of \$264 million to HBCUs (Dervarics, 2002). These numbers would ensure an average of approximately \$2 million for all HBCU undergraduate programs, and since there were fewer eligible graduate programs, those eligible would receive an average of \$3 million (Dervarics, 2002). Even with this increase, the budget would still fall short of the proposed budget of \$295 million sought by HBCU leaders (Dervarics, 2002). In addition, federal grants from

Housing and Urban Development in the amount of \$10.7 million were distributed to 22 HBCUs to help revitalize their campuses and their surrounding communities (New York Amsterdam News, 2002).

In 2007, President Bush signed the temporary two-year College Cost Reduction and Access Act which gave HBCUs and Predominantly Black Institutions an additional \$100 million (Brown, 2008; H.R. 2669, 2007). By 2008, the Bush Administration, proposed cuts in education affecting HBCU funding and essentially cancelling out the increase approved for HBCUs in the 2007 Cost Reduction and Access Act (Brown, 2008; USDOE, 2010b). The White House officials stated that the cuts would hardly have an effect on HBCUs because the funding would basically stay the same (Brown, 2008). In 2011, the House of Representatives passed a bill which cut the funding to HBCUs and other mostly minority serving institutions (Townes, 2011). The National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), were outraged that the bill cut more than \$350 million in assistance to HBCUs and their students (House of Representatives Bill 1, 2011; NAFEO, 2010; Townes, 2011).

One solution to finding ways to increase funding for HBCUs, since cuts by state and federal governments are increasing, is to garner support from the former students who have received an HBCU education, the alumni. It has been researched that 13 percent of all college graduates donate regularly to their alma maters, but Black graduates donate money far less in the single digits (Gray, 2011). According to Dr. Frank G. Pogue, Jr., Grambling State University's Interim President, HBCU alumni do not have a tradition of giving back to their alma maters (Stuart, 2012). Marybeth Gasman, an

assistant professor of higher education at the University of Pennsylvania and Sibby Anderson-Thompkins, a Ph.D. student at Georgia State University, wrote in their book, *Fund Raising From Black-College Alumni: Successful Strategies for Supporting Alma Mater*, that HBCUs raise less money from their alumni than primarily White institutions (Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003). Most colleges and universities have sustainability through the support of their endowments, in which the institutions can use the money received from the endowments' interest. Harvard University has an endowment of approximately \$27.5 billion, whereas Howard University has an endowment of approximately \$400 million, which has decreased due to the recession (Gray, 2011).

More recently, HBCUs have increased their efforts to attract more alumni donors, but it is a slow process (Gray, 2011). One way to encourage alumni to give is by presenting information about past contributions of alumni members and discussing how with their contributions, the individual HBCU can help current students and reach certain goals, including those that are financial (Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003). Gilbert Rochon, Ph.D., president of Tuskegee University, and a fourth-generation HBCU alumnus has stated that HBCUs cannot continue to remain vulnerable and beholden to the fluctuations of state and federal government funding (Gray, 2011; Tuskegee University, 2013). The public HBCUs seem to be having a harder time with the fundraising efforts since they have relied on state and federal funding for many years, whereas the private HBCUs have had to rely on private support to stay operational, so they have developed and refined their methods of fundraising through giving campaigns (Stuart, 2012). According to Lois Deloatch, vice chancellor for institutional development at North

Carolina Central University, private schools have been fundraising since their beginnings out of necessity to sustain their institution, but public HBCUs, because of their state and federal funding cuts, have to now see fundraising as an essential means of supporting their institutions (Stuart, 2012).

Another way to increase funding for HBCUs is to launch capital and planned giving campaigns which are methods that other colleges and universities have been using for years but HBCUs have been hesitant to use because of their reliability on state and federal funds (Stuart, 2012). HBCUs such as West Virginia State University have begun a five-year, \$12.5 million capital campaign, and Fort Valley State University in Georgia has been researching the possibility of starting a planned giving campaign (Stuart, 2012). Some companies have started working with HBCUs to assist in their planned giving efforts, such as The Dream Company, which is an Alabama-based life insurance company that sells group life insurance policies with death benefits going to designated HBCUs as specified by the policyholder (Stuart, 2012; The Dream Company, 2010). The National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) has partnered with The Dream Company to provide this service to many HBCUs (NAFEO, 2010; Stuart, 2012). Approximately 16 HBCUs have already signed up to be a part of this fundraising program (Stuart, 2012). Peggy Williams, vice president for sales and marketing for The Dream Company stated that many people do not want to discuss planned giving because it is a discussion about death in a business sense, but by explaining the process, more people are inclined to establish a living legacy for their alma maters (Stuart, 2012).

Calvin W. Lowe, former president of Bowie State University, has stated that the challenge for public HBCUs is always resources (Wilson Mbajekwe, 2006). The question is how to operate with the current resources without increasing tuition to where it reaches the level of the tuition for a private institution (Wilson Mbajekwe, 2006). Many times, foundations think that public or state-supported institutions do not need money, when that is not the case, especially during these hard economic times (Wilson Mbajekwe, 2006). As mentioned earlier, The Dream Company, along with NAFEO, are working with HBCUs, to increase funding for their institutions (NAFEO, 2010). In addition to NAFEO, other organizations have been raising funds to assist HBCUs in their efforts to keep these institutions open in order to help students receive an education. The United Negro College Fund has been in existence since 1944 and provides operating funds for its 38 member colleges, which are all small, private HBCUs (UNCF, 2012). Along with operating funds, UNCF supports students through scholarships, internship programs, fellowships, and institutional grants for undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral level students (UNCF, 2012). UNCF also has a Capacity Building Institute which is an institutional improvement initiative comprising curriculum and faculty enhancement, student recruitment and retention, and fundraising (UNCF, 2012). The Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF) was founded in 1987 and named after the first Black United States Supreme Court Justice. It is the only national organization to provide scholarships and programs, including capacity building support, to its 47 member schools which consist of public HBCUs, medical schools, and law schools (TMCF, 2012). To date, TMCF has awarded over \$100 million in assistance to students and its member schools (TMCF, 2012).



**Negative perceptions.** How an HBCU or graduate of an HBCU is viewed can affect whether an institution will receive funding or whether a student can obtain employment. The perception of HBCUs can ultimately affect an institution's sustainability. Mikyong Minsun Kim and Clifton F. Conrad (2006) studied how HBCUs affect the academic success of Black students. They found that HBCU graduates and non-HBCU graduates have equivalent talent for all types of organizations in the United States (Kim & Conrad, 2006). The problem that they realized is that there is bias against those graduating from HBCUs (Kim & Conrad, 2006). When discussing the perceptions of HBCUs, it seems that the negative aspects are constantly being presented and publicized, which can give the general public the impression that HBCUs are not productive entities. Information such as the closing of one HBCU, due to its loss of federal funding and accreditation because of a scandal involving a former college president and financial aid director, is one type of negative publicity that is true for some HBCUs, but should not be the only piece of information distributed (Gray, 2011). Other HBCUs may have lost their accreditations because of IRS troubles, uninhabitable buildings, or other serious campus or financial issues, but that should not be the only information presented to the public because it does not reflect all HBCUs (Gray, 2011).

Some common detrimental themes that have been portrayed about HBCUs have been their decline in quality, student desertion, failures, and strong religious devotion which have all been seen as a negative (Gasman, 2008). Comments regarding decline have focused on finances and accreditation (Gasman, 2008). When finances and accreditation are discussed about one HBCU, the statement becomes a generalization about all HBCUs which sheds a dark light on those who do not have financial or

accreditation problems (Gasman, 2008). When referring to desertion, the problem is not usually the desertion by the HBCU toward its students, but the desertion of the students towards the HBCU (Gasman, 2008). Articles written in newspapers or magazines about HBCUs usually have quotes or paraphrased comments of students who either enjoy their experience at an HBCU or regret the time that they have attended the HBCU (Gasman, 2008). If the article discusses the problems that have occurred at a particular HBCU, then the comments by students, as reported in the article will also be negative, and once again the article will state that the negativity does not just occur at the school mentioned, but occurs throughout the over 100 HBCUs, which would be a false statement (Gasman, 2008). Statements about failure can focus on several items regarding an HBCU. They can appear in the form of a failure to gain accreditation, failure to win an accreditation appeal, the failed actions of a new president, or failure in management by the HBCU's administration (Gasman, 2008; Gasman & Bowman III, 2011). Finally, one area that may be stated about most HBCUs is their religious devotion. As mentioned earlier, many HBCUs were founded by churches, church groups, or those with some kind of religious affiliation. When there is something negative to report in an article, many times the religious affiliation of the HBCU is also mentioned (Gasman, 2008). Statements made will allude to the problems the HBCU is facing with a religious overtone such as "the ceremony at times felt like a church revival" (Gasman, 2008, p. 127) or students leaving a campus as the *exodus* or when an administrator's struggles are discussed then it is their *faith* that will get them through the rough times or their *plight* as an administrator (Gasman, 2008). As important as it is for people to be aware of the status of colleges and universities, it is also very important to know all of the information; not just the bad, but

also the good (Gray, 2011). There have been HBCUs that won and lost accreditation and have been placed on probation, but there are others that have flourished and continue to make strides (Gray, 2011).

Often times, arguments are made to support HBCUs, as well as discourage the continuance of them. It seems that what HBCUs may lack in resources, they make up for by providing a more supportive learning environment for students, as well as faculty (Constantine, 1995). According to Beverly Guy-Sheftall, the founding director of Spelman's Women's Research and Resource Center and an adjunct professor at Emory University,

People often think of HBCUs as places that find services for needy students. That is one of the arguments made to justify HBCUs' existence. While it's true that we do things that majority colleges don't do, that we're more sensitive to certain things and that we provide safe space for students, that's a partial narrative. Academic mission [and] intellectual legacy is another narrative that needs to be underscored. (Gray, 2011, p.141).

With the negative perceptions that loom over HBCUs, there are threats and opportunities that could shape their future existence (Nealy, 2009). Some threats that HBCUs must watch for are the recession, funding and development issues. Raising student tuition and depending on state and federal funds will not be an option (Nealy, 2009). Fundraising, as previously discussed, will continuously be a factor with both public and private HBCUs. The discussion of raising tuition can be a factor preventing students from attending an HBCU, which is a second threat to HBCU sustainability

(Nealy, 2009). A third threat may be the rise of for-profit colleges and universities. Because there are so many for-profit institutions rising to the forefront and recruiting students, but more specifically Black and Hispanic students, HBCUs may have a difficult time recruiting, retaining, and graduating students (Nealy, 2009). A fourth threat may be the campus culture of HBCUs. A perception associated with HBCUs is that they are conservative and set rules and policies that are outdated such as curfews, monitoring student media, and restricting faculty research (Nealy, 2009). A final threat may be the fear of closing. With some HBCUs having financial and accreditation problems, it is realistic to believe that the negative publicity can hurt subsequent enrollment and funding (Nealy, 2009).

Even though the threats may seem unlikely to go away soon, there may be some viable opportunities such as the first one being that HBCUs give their students a sense of pride (Nealy, 2009). Second is that HBCUs graduate many Black teachers and these teachers can play a key role in researching the disparity of qualified teachers and the achievement gap, but the biggest problem, once again is funding for these type of programs (Nealy, 2009). Specialty programs, as a third opportunity, for science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and teacher education can be a unique aspect to specific HBCUs and a draw for potential students (Nealy, 2009). A fourth opportunity is for HBCUs to recruit students from other races and diverse backgrounds. Changing their missions has been a constant topic of discussion, but actively recruiting a more diverse student body could bring in additional funding, especially if the HBCU is also designated as a Hispanic-serving institution (Nealy, 2009). Finally, HBCUs have been taking their academic excellence to other countries to benefit the global community (Nealy, 2009).

These are just a few examples of threats and opportunities for HBCUs, but to understand their future possibilities, one must conduct individual research to examine how relevant each HBCU may be.

### **Case Studies**

Through this case study of HBCUs, it will be interesting to discover that even though they may hold the title of Historically Black College or University, each one is unique in their own right and provides different experiences for those who may attend, receive an education, and eventually graduate from these institutions of higher learning. This study will focus on four specific HBCUs, which have been selected based on certain unique qualities that they possess. To maintain confidentiality, the universities will be referred to as HBCU 1, HBCU 2, HBCU 3, and HBCU 4.

**HBCU 1.** To begin, the first university studied was HBCU 1, which was one of the first HBCUs established during the mid-1800s. This university is a public institution with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 1,100 students, and a student-to-faculty ratio of 16 to 1 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). Part of this university's mission states that it is "committed to preparing confident, competent, reflective, visionary leaders and responsible citizens" (Emmert, 2009, p. 208)

Some of the academic programs that it is known for are Education and Teacher Certification, Biological Sciences, Business Administration and Management, Speech Communication, Psychology, and Sociology (Emmert, 2009; NCES, 2011). The university is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and its Teacher Education program is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCES, 2011; U.S. News and World Report [USNEWS], 2013). Some of the university's notable accomplishments are its Honors Academy, Teacher

Education Program, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines that were originally instituted on the campus as a possible response to the needs of its surrounding community (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013). The demographics regarding men and women are a little different than most universities because even though the women outnumber the men, the percentage is very close: 52 percent women and 48 percent men (USNEWS, 2013). The majority of the students are African-American, but Latino students and students who designate themselves under two or more races are also a part of the demographics (NCES, 2011). The graduation rate of this university after four years is 13 percent and after six years is 24 percent (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013). An interesting factor is that even though the graduation rate is low, the admissions rate or acceptance rate is high. This university has a rolling admission policy and an acceptance rate of at least 80 percent, giving as many students as possible the opportunity to attend (USNEWS, 2013).

**HBCU 2.** The second university to be studied is HBCU 2. This university is one of several HBCUs that have a predominantly white student body. It is a public institution with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 2,800 students with a student-to-faculty ratio of 15 to 1 (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013). Part of its mission statement states that it is an:

...historically black university, which has evolved into a fully accessible, racially integrated, and multi-generational institution... a living laboratory of human relations, ... a community of students, staff, and faculty committed to academic growth, service, and preservation of the racial and cultural diversity of the institution. Our mission is to meet higher

education and economic development needs of the state and region through innovative teaching and applied research (USNEWS, 2013, para. 1).

Some of the academic programs it is known for are Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, Humanities, Criminal Justice, Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Teaching, Speech Communication, Business Administration and Management (Emmert, 2009; NCES, 2011). The university is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools - The Higher Learning Commission, The Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs, The American Chemical Society, The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and The Council on Social Work Education (NCES, 2011). Some of the university's notable accomplishments are its Leadership Institute, its Competitive Research Program, its STEM Success Program to increase the number of students graduating with degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, and being one of 166 colleges throughout the United States and one of six HBCUs to be authorized to establish an aviation program (National Museum of the US Air Force (NMUSAF), 2011). The demographics regarding men and women are that women are 58 percent of the student population, and men are 42 percent of the student population (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013). The ethnicity of the students is 61 percent White, 13 percent African-American, 24 percent ethnicity unknown, and 3 percent American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, and Latino (NCES, 2011). The student graduation rate after four years is 7 percent and after six years is 25 percent, but the acceptance rate for entering freshman students is 62 percent (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013).

**HBCU 3.** The third university in this study is HBCU 3. This public university was established by the legislature and specifically mentioned in its state constitution (Texas State Historical Association [TSHA], 1999; Texas State Library and Archives Commission [TSLAC], 2011; University of Texas at Austin [UTA], 2009). Part of its mission states that it is:

...dedicated to excellence in teaching, research and service. It is committed to achieving relevance in each component of its mission by addressing issues and proposing solutions through programs and services designed to respond to the needs and aspirations of individuals, families, organizations, agencies, schools, and communities--both rural and urban... [while] serving a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population... (USNEWS, 2013, para. 1).

It has an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 6,800 students with a student to faculty ratio of 17 to 1. Some of the academic programs it is known for are Nursing, Medicine, and other Health Profession programs; Architecture; Agriculture; Engineering; Business; Criminal and Juvenile Justice; and Education (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013). The university is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges, in addition to accreditations for the following departments: The College of Agriculture and Human Sciences, The College of Architecture, The College of Business, two accreditations for the College of Arts and Sciences, two accreditations for the College of Education, three accreditations for the College of Engineering, and three accreditations for the College of Nursing (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013). Some of the notable accomplishments of this university are the



College of Nursing receiving a \$3 million endowment, the university receiving a \$5 million grant to study energy and environmental sustainability, winning an academic quiz bowl against other HBCUs, and The Honors Program. The demographics for the university are approximately 60 percent female and 40 percent male with the majority of students of African-American descent, 87 percent, and the another 8 percent of Asian, Latino, and White ethnicity (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013). The student graduation rate after four years is 11 percent and after six years is 34 percent with a freshman acceptance rate of 40.1 percent (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013).

**HBCU 4.** The fourth university in this study is HBCU 4. This private university has an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 2,700 students with a student-to-faculty ratio of 12 to 1 (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013). Some of the academic programs it is known for are Animal Sciences; Biological Sciences; Business Administration, Management, and Accounting; Engineering; and Psychology (NCES, 2011). Part of the university's mission states that their

...groundbreaking research and the quest for new knowledge are how we prepare our students-and the world-for the demands of tomorrow. If you think learning in such a high-tech, high-touch environment is exciting, wait until you see what this rigorous experience can do for your future employment opportunities. All of this doesn't just happen, of course.

...we have spent well over a century building this model of excellence in teaching and learning. (USNEWS, 2013, para. 1).

The university is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges and has multiple accreditations for other departments including

The American Dietetic Association-Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education, American Veterinary Medical Association-Council on Education, The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and The National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NCES, 2011). Some of the notable accomplishments of this university are that it is designated as a National Historic site by the United States Congress, it is another HBCU with an aeronautical program, and it has a veterinary medicine program. The demographics of the university are approximately 57 percent female and 43 percent male with 87 percent of the students African-American (NCES, 2011). The graduation rate for the university after four years is 15 percent and after six years is 43 percent with an acceptance rate for freshman students of approximately 65 percent (NCES, 2011; USNEWS, 2013).

**General facts.** HBCUs have been very instrumental in educating Black students since their inception. Looking at statistical information regarding the number of Black students who have graduated from HBCUs, it can be construed that they have been instrumental in educating many top professionals in several different fields of study. Within the United States, there are approximately 6,900 postsecondary institutions and programs accredited and recognized by the United States Secretary of Education of the Department of Education (USDOE, 2012b). According to the United Negro College Fund and the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, there are 105 HBCUs across the nation (UNCF, 2012; USDOE, 2010a). HBCUs represent three to four percent of the colleges and universities in the United States (UNCF, 2012). This three to four percent graduate 20-25 percent of Blacks earning undergraduate degrees (UNCF, 2012). In addition to undergraduate degrees, HBCUs

have graduated over 50 percent of Black professionals in many different fields, 50 percent of Black public school teachers, and 70 percent of Black dentists (UNCF, 2012). HBCUs also award more than one-third of the degrees held by Blacks in the natural sciences and mathematics (UNCF, 2012). In a 2004 McKinsey study, the average graduation rate of Blacks at many HBCUs is higher than the average graduate rate of Blacks at traditionally White institutions (UNCF, 2012). Even though the premise for establishing HBCUs was to educate Blacks, students of all ethnic backgrounds attend HBCUs.

**Contrary opinions.** Bobby Lovett, Ph.D. (2011), the author of the book *America's Historically Black College: A Narrative History, 1837-2009*, stated that the next ten years will be a critical time for HBCUs because of the growing ambivalence of some Blacks to give them support. His expectations are that the number of HBCUs in existence will decline through possible mergers and consolidations, as stated previously through the urging of some politicians, or simply due to some folding because they cannot sustain without additional funding (Lovett, 2011).

There are some people who believe that HBCUs should continue to exist because of their history, nurturing value, graduation rates, and student preparation for the real world. Others believe that some HBCUs should be eliminated due to financial or accreditation problems. One such person is Walter Kimbrough, Ph.D. who was referenced earlier as stating that due to socioeconomic factors, more resources are necessary to assist low-income students which would increase graduation rates (Gray, 2011; Kimbrough, 2011). His opinion regarding some financially-burdened HBCUs is that:

If some of these struggling HBCUs have to close down, I say it is what it is. My saying out loud that I can live with some HBCUs closing down probably is viewed as treason. If there are schools that are damaging the HBCU brand, that are chronically in trouble...close them, sell them, and put a new school in their place. We've had a history of keeping troubled schools on life support when they really should be allowed to die. (Gray, 2011, pp. 140-141).

Many opinions about HBCUs have been given by journalists and other educators such as Wall Street Journal writer Jason Riley and university professor Richard Vedder, who is also the director for the Center for College Affordability and Productivity (Kimbrough, 2011). Both have made statements in opposition of the sustainability of HBCUs (Kimbrough, 2011). Both have focused on the struggling HBCUs that have financial problems and students who may have low scores and low incomes (Kimbrough, 2011). Mr. Vedder believes that HBCUs should not receive special funding due to their race-based status, and should enroll more non-black students (Kimbrough, 2011; Vedder, 2010). Vedder considers the best of HBCUs to be “fairly decent but hardly superb institutions” (Vedder, 2010). Mr. Riley feels that there should be an end to HBCUs, quoting an economist Thomas Sowell, “Even the best black colleges and universities do not approach the standards of quality of respectable institutions” (Kimbrough, 2011; Riley, 2010). Mr. Riley made the suggestion that HBCUs should be transformed into community colleges, but a researcher, Vincent Tinto, at Syracuse University revealed that Blacks are more likely to graduate from college with a Bachelor’s Degree if they start at a

four-year institution rather than begin college at a two-year institution and then transferring (Kimbrough, 2011). In an article written by Mr. Riley in 2010, he stated,

When segregation was legal, Black colleges were responsible for almost all Black collegians. Today, nearly 90 percent of Black students spurn such schools, and the available evidence shows that, in the main, these students are better off exercising their non-HBCU options. (as cited in Gasman & Bowman III, 2011).

In order to combat negative opinions such as those of Mr. Riley and Mr. Vedder, HBCUs can start by involving the media in their accomplishments by establishing relationships with local, state, and national reporters (Gasman & Bowman III, 2011). A strong proponent of HBCUs is Mr. John Silvanus Wilson, Jr., the former executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and recently appointed president of Morehouse College. During a speech that he made at a Thurgood Marshall College Fund conference for the member universities in 2011 regarding HBCUs, Mr. Wilson stated that HBCUs are under attack and they cannot seem to “get a fair shake from the media” (Wilson, 2011, p. 4). He mentioned that there should be *dignified publicity* which would “set an important tone for how HBCUs would be thought of, invested in, and advanced...it is the key to accessing and tapping the philanthropic marketplace, in order to competitively strengthen capacity of these institutions” (Wilson, 2011, p. 2). Mr. Wilson also stated that to counteract undignified publicity, such as what Mr. Riley and Mr. Vedder have published, HBCUs must more effectively highlight the positive aspects of what is really happening at their campuses so

that they can be worthy of the dignified publicity (Wilson, 2011). As he ended his speech, he reminded everyone that:

For nearly a century, HBCUs have faced a steady flow of undignified publicity. It is a bad time to have to face it now. It is about time that we faced it more productively. And... it is our time for giving all real and potential supporters a new set of more dignified reasons to heavily invest in HBCUs. (Wilson, 2011, p. 9).

### **Summary**

Through its history, Historically Black Colleges and Universities have struggled to prove their legitimacy among all other colleges and universities throughout the country. HBCUs represent three to four percent of all American colleges and universities, and they continue to enroll and graduate a significant number of students, even though Black students have much more access to other institutions of higher education than they did in the past (Garabaldi, 1997). After the debate over the kind of curriculum to establish at HBCUs, industrial or classical liberal, the focus of many HBCUs included an industrial curriculum due to pressure by philanthropic supporters, foundations, and industrialists. Changes in curriculum have taken place over the years due to societal discrimination and social injustices.

Today, many HBCUs have an extensive selection of programs with varied curricula, such as medicine, journalism, business, technology, and engineering. Some programs that may have been considered unconventional in the past are now important parts of the curricula at some HBCUs due to societal changes such as environmental sciences and forest, air, water, and soil conservation. Since the early 1970s, liberal arts and education programs have become less of a priority for some HBCUs so they could

strengthen other more timely programs, such as the environmental programs mentioned earlier, at the expense of traditional ones (Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2002). Scholars must justify the reasoning behind the elimination of some of the traditional programs for new and advanced programs (Gasman et al., 2010a). HBCUs want to add these new programs in order to highlight advancements and changes on their campuses, to gather support for the programs and their individual institutions, and improve on the curricula, in addition to benefiting students at partnering institutions of higher learning (Gasman et al., 2010a). When HBCUs develop specialty programs, they can reinforce or advance their position in the academic and business communities as a primary institution for specific academic training when employers are searching for educated and talented students (Nealy, 2009).

One thing HBCUs have continuously been able to do since their inception is accommodate the interests of public and private sources of financial and in-kind support while at the same time offering practical and significant educational opportunities to benefit their students of all races and the Black community at large (Gasman et al., 2010a; LeMelle, 2002). Over the years, private and public HBCUs have produced thousands of successful, knowledgeable, and competitive graduates who have helped to universally improve our quality of life (LeMelle, 2002). In order for HBCUs to continue producing competitive graduates and remain stable within their communities, they must garner financial support from sources other than state and federal governments. These alternative sources may include their alumni, corporations, foundations, and individuals contributing through donations to capital campaigns, endowments, or planned giving.

An aspect of change which could attract more financial support and student enrollment may be a change in the HBCU mission from supporting only Black students

to supporting all students and welcoming a diverse student body to the campuses. A change in mission statements for HBCUs has been a concern, since the perception is that they still focus on the needs of only Black students. When inspecting the mission statements of individual HBCUs, such as those of the four universities highlighted in this research, it is clear that some universities have already changed their mission statements to reflect the changing demographics of their campuses. While positive and negative aspects of HBCUs have been researched regarding financial support, perceptions, mission statements, the histories of individual universities, and supporting or contrary opinions, HBCUs must evaluate the possible threats facing their existence and the opportunities that could help them survive during these difficult economic times so that they may be able to answer the ultimate question of whether they are still relevant.



### **Chapter 3. Methods**

#### **Introduction**

There are 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) located in the United States. Even though these colleges and universities are described or categorized under the umbrella of the term HBCU, each one has its own unique and distinct qualities, which make each one stand out from among the rest. For this research, the examination of HBCUs was scaled down to four institutions that have distinct characteristics in the areas of mission statements, academics, accreditation, demographics, graduation rates, and accomplishments. The focus on these criteria gave additional rationale for answering the main research question of whether HBCUs, or more specifically, these four HBCUs, are still relevant.

The design for this research is a case study of four HBCUs. There are multiple definitions of a case study, but for the purposes of this research, a case study is “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Because the 105 HBCUs are a vast compilation of multiple cases, which could be extensively explored over time, this research focused on the multiple bounded systems or selected cases of four HBCUs. The four universities selected were identified as HBCU 1, HBCU 2, HBCU 3, and HBCU 4. HBCU1 is one of the first Historically Black Colleges and Universities established; HBCU 2 has a predominantly white student body; HBCU 3 was established in its state constitution; and HBCU4 is internationally known for one of its programs. These four have very unique characteristics that lend

themselves to be studied and analyzed for the purpose of determining whether they are still relevant by providing services and contributing to the advancement of their students, communities and external entities.

### **Restatement of Research Questions**

In order to determine relevance for this study, six research questions were designed and used to assess and analysis HBCUs in general, and more specifically, the four identified learning institutions. The research questions are as follows:

1. Are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) still relevant?
2. Does the mission of each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, need to be completely changed or revamped and modernized?
3. What are the perceptions of the brand for each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general?
4. Has the communication between the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, and the media been adequate to effectively publicize their accomplishments?
5. Has the need for HBCUs in general been reduced so that some of the existing institutions should close?
6. What are the leaders or representatives of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, doing to change the public's perceptions as to the relevance of their learning institutions?

These research questions will be used for determining the continued relevance of HBCUs, more specifically, the four universities that will be highlighted.

**Description of the Research Methodology**

The methodology that will be used to answer these questions will be a qualitative multi-case study method with a purposeful sampling of the cases and the individuals to be interviewed. “Case studies, especially qualitative case studies, are prevalent throughout the field of education” (Merriam, 1998, p. 26). Many qualitative studies in education are not studies of single units, nor do they focus on culture, instead their intent is to discover and understand a particular phenomenon through the perspectives and views of others (Merriam, 1998). For this case study, the phenomenon of four HBCUs or multiple-bounded systems will be studied through the perspectives of those who have attended or are associated with these universities and HBCUs in general in order to gain an understanding of why these institutions of higher learning are still considered relevant.

**Qualitative design.** Qualitative research assumes that the study of research problems questions the meanings individuals or groups perceive to be a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). By using a qualitative approach, inquiries, data collection in the setting under investigation, and data analysis will be inductive by establishing patterns or themes (Creswell, 2007). According to Merriam (1998), there are certain characteristics such as the research focus, philosophy, investigation goals, design, sample, data collection, mode of analysis, and findings that identify a qualitative study as opposed to a quantitative study. The focus of the research for a qualitative study is the quality of the nature or essence of the entity to be studied, instead of the quantity or how much of the entity to be studied as found in quantitative (Bryman, 2008; Merriam, 1998). The philosophical roots of the qualitative study delve into the phenomenon of the subject that will be researched, whereas, a quantitative study looks at the logic behind the

researched subject (Merriam, 1998). The goal for investigating the subject in a qualitative study is to understand the subject and discover the meaning of the existence, whereas in a quantitative study, the goal is to predict and control the testing of the subject (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). The qualitative design is flexible with a small, nonrandom, and purposeful sample to be researched, whereas a quantitative design is structured with large and random samples (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). The data collection process for a qualitative study uses the researcher as an instrument to collect data, in addition to interviews and documents, instead of scales and tests that are used in quantitative studies (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). Ultimately, the researcher will analyze the data collected through the use of inductive reasoning, and the findings will be descriptive and comprehensive in a qualitative study, as opposed to a quantitative study which will allow the researcher to use statistical methods as a conduit for deductive analysis, and the findings will be more numerical and precise (Bryman, 2008; Merriam, 1998). After reviewing the differences between qualitative and quantitative design characteristics, this study used the characteristics of a qualitative design with a quality focus, phenomenological philosophy, investigative goals of understanding and discovery, flexible design, small and nonrandom sample, data collection of interviews and documents, inductive mode of analysis, and comprehensive and descriptive findings.

**Qualitative process.** Within qualitative research, there is a sequence outlined to understand the process (Bryman, 2008). This sequence is as follows: (a) start by identifying the general research questions, (b) select the relevant sites or subjects to be studied, (c) collect relevant data, (d) interpret the data that was collected, (e) conceptualize and theorize about the work, which may lead to reviewing the research

questions to refine them and collecting additional data, and (f) writing the findings along with the conclusion (Bryman, 2008, p. 370-372). The purpose of using qualitative research is to study a problem that needs to be explored (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the general research questions have been identified and all relate to the main question of whether HBCUs are still relevant. The relevant sites or subjects to be studied are the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, but more specifically, four HBCUs will be highlighted.

The data collected consisted of statistical information collected from the universities and foundations that regularly collect data on the demographics and graduation rates for the universities, as well as interviews of the university alumni and associates to gather their opinions as to why they consider their universities to still be relevant in the higher education arena. The data was interpreted partially during the interviews of the university alumni members and associates of the HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, as they explained the missions, demographics, academic programs, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments of their universities and partially after the interviews as the researcher evaluated the results of the interviews and how their responses related to the data and main research question. The conceptualizing and theorizing of the study took place during the data interpretation process, and additional follow-up questions were necessary to ask the university alumni and associates to gain clarification of their responses. The findings were explained by showing the credibility and significance of the interpretation of the research as the conclusion references future studies that could be conducted on other HBCUs to once again determine if other

institutions of higher learning can be deemed “still relevant” according to the same criteria used in the current study.

**Qualitative researcher.** A qualitative researcher is interested in understanding how people make sense of the world they live in and the experiences they have within that world (Merriam, 1998). This type of research can reveal how many parts can come together to form a whole (Merriam, 1998). According to Creswell (2007), the qualitative researcher will utilize certain characteristics to form a good qualitative study. These characteristics for the researcher will include:

1. Rigorous data collection procedures, using multiple forms of data and summarizing the data in detail,
2. Being used as an instrument of data collection focusing on the views of those participating in the study,
3. Identifying a research approach,
4. Having a single focus, and then as the study progresses, expanding the focus by incorporating comparisons,
5. Validating the accuracy of the data collection,
6. Presenting the study in layers or stages, from particulars to generalities,
7. Writing in a persuasive and engaging manner, so the reader can feel as if he or she were actually a part of the study,
8. Interweaving the researcher’s personal experiences related to the subject matter, and
9. Ensuring the ethical nature of the study through all phases of the research.

For this study, the rigorous data collection was done through the use of interviews using open-ended questions and reviewing the data collected by the universities and foundations relating to each of the four highlighted universities. Allowing the researcher to be used as an instrument for collecting data, the quality of the interviews were heightened by attentively listening to the answers of those interviewed and providing follow-up questions to enhance the research and provide clarification to the responses. The research approach was a multiple case study with the main focus on the relevance of HBCUs. As the research progressed, the focus expanded to missions, demographics, academic programs, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments of four specific HBCUs. Validating the data was done by using multiple sources of evidence and also establishing a chain of evidence showing the data results were similar in other research or survey findings, as well as replicating the research for all four highlighted HBCUs and comparing their information to statistical data for HBCUs in general. The information about HBCUs was presented in this study in different levels starting with generalizations, then branching into specifics about the four universities, and finally returning to generalizations and making comparisons, after reviewing the results of the research. The research was written in a persuasive manner to engage the reader in the study of HBCUs and their relevance, with minimal information regarding the researcher's experiences with HBCUs, and ensuring the ethical and reliable nature of the study by providing detailed procedures in conducting the research so that others who may be interested can conduct the same research themselves.

**Case study approach.** In the case of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, these 105 institutions of higher learning are the many parts that have come

together to form under the umbrella entitled HBCUs. There are 105 of these colleges and universities within the United States, and to study all of them as a unit under the HBCU umbrella would not give a clear understanding of what each one can offer, nor would an overall study of them justify why each individual college or university is relevant. “The nation’s historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are diverse. Although we discuss them as a category based on their historical racial makeup, these institutions are in fact quite different from one another” (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2007, p.1). Through the research, it has been found that many journalists classify all HBCUs as the same, with the same problems and issues, with little variations (Riley, 2010; Vedder, 2010). These colleges and universities are not being distinguished by the media for their unique qualities. Part of the methodology for this research will be to select four out of the 105 HBCUs and thoroughly analyze their missions, demographics, academic programs, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments to establish why they are considered relevant. A case study method was used because the overall study of HBCUs is extensive. Within this case study method, each university is a case to be examined, so through this process, the research examined multiple bounded systems or cases described as a multi-site study (Creswell, 2007).

“A case study is the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case” (Bryman, 2008, p. 52). “It is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Case studies have been used as a research strategy in many subject areas such as psychology, sociology, political science, social work, business, and community planning (Yin, 2003). Anthropologists and



sociologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski, who studied the indigenous culture of people in Melanesia, and Hippolyte Leplay, who studied families, wrote ethnographies but used a qualitative case study research method (Creswell, 2007). Their research has been seen as precursors to more prevalent qualitative case study research in the education arena starting in the 1970s with the ethnographic case study of *The Man in the Principal's Office* by Harry F. Wolcott (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Additional studies and books have been written explaining the use of a qualitative case study approach and focusing on education by authors Sharan B. Merriam, Michael Huberman, Michael Bassey, Robert E. Stake, and Robert K. Yin.

Case studies have been viewed in two contexts: the single-case and multiple-case approaches. The single-case study is similar to a single experiment because it can represent a critical case while testing a theory, identify a unique or extreme case as in clinical psychology, represent a typical or common case, uncover an unexplored case or situation, or show changing conditions as in a longitudinal study of the same case studied at different points in time (Yin, 2003). The multiple-case study contains more than one case, and can be described as collective, multisite, cross-case, or comparative (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). The advantages to using a multiple case study are that the evidence from many cases is considered more fascinating making for a stronger overall study, and the studying of multiple variables brings more of an understanding to the phenomenon that is researched (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). By using a multiple-case study, a replication logic will be instituted so that the same research process can be replicated with the other cases to be reviewed (Yin, 2003). With multiple cases, there is the possibility of theoretical replication showing that contrasting situations bring different

results, which in turn can strengthen the external validity of the findings (Yin, 2003). As with any case study, other research approaches, such as ethnography, as seen in earlier research mentioned, and phenomenology can be a part of a case study design.

The study of HBCUs is a historical journey through issues of segregation, integration, and the civil rights movement in higher education (Lovett, 2011). This historical look into the HBCU experience could be studied as a phenomenological research design delving into the lived experiences of a random sample of individuals over a period of time searching for meanings in certain patterns (Creswell, 2009). The phenomenological research design method does not help to analyze the main question of whether HBCUs are still relevant because it focuses on past experiences taking little into consideration of current events, advances, and future possibilities. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology looks into what individuals experienced and how they experienced the event or circumstance. Even though the history and struggles of historically black colleges and universities can be seen as a phenomenon, this research did not examine the phenomenon of HBCUs or study the individuals who have attended these institutions, although these items were briefly mentioned. Rather, it focused on four select HBCUs that have unique qualities, and through the investigation of data regarding each one, it was determined that they are still relevant to higher education. Because the researcher is a graduate of two HBCUs, the information that was researched had a more detailed focus, and the interviews were conducted by someone who has an interest in the study of HBCUs. It may have also allowed those interviewed to be more open in their opinions about HBCUs (Creswell, 1994).

**Process for Selection of Data Sources**

This qualitative multiple case study used purposive data sampling of the 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as well as their alumni and associates. Purposive sampling is the selection of units, or in this situation HBCUs and people associated with the HBCUs, who directly referenced the research questions that were asked (Bryman, 2008). In other words, the researcher selected individuals and sites to study because those entities could “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). The cases studied were four HBCUs located across the United States. These four have unique qualities that related to the main research question of whether HBCUs are still relevant. The four universities were designated as HBCU 1, HBCU 2, HBCU 3, and HBCU 4. HBCU 1 is one of the first HBCUs established; HBCU 2 has a predominately white student body; HBCU 3 was established in its state constitution; and HBCU 4 is internationally known for one of its programs. Each university has different qualities that make them notable in their own right. The individuals who were interviewed as part of the study were alumni members and those associated with the HBCUs who could give insight into the inner-workings of these universities, as well as explanations as to the data collected by external organizations. These individuals were contacted initially by the researcher to determine if they would be interested in being a participant in the research. If an individual did not agree to be interviewed, then the researcher continued to target individuals until there were 12 individuals who agreed to be interviewed. After each individual agreed to be interviewed, the participant was asked to sign an informed consent form, then he or she was sent the list of interview questions, and the interview

was scheduled to take place either in-person or by telephone (see Appendices B and C). For the in-person interviews, the researcher recorded the participant's responses, observed the environment in which the interview took place, and afterwards, transcribed the recording. For the telephone interviews, the researcher recorded the participant's responses and then transcribed the recordings. For both the in-person and phone interviews, the researcher compiled, coded, and categorized the data; reviewed the information for within-case and cross-case analysis; discovered themes; and created theories with assertions and generalizations which led to answering the main research question of whether Historically Black Colleges and Universities are relevant (see Appendix D).

### **Definition of Analysis Unit**

A unit of analysis is defined by the initial research question and will be the focus of attention for the study (Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2003). For a case study, four or five cases "should provide ample opportunity to identify themes of the cases as well as conduct cross-case theme analysis" (Creswell, 2007, p. 128). The units of analysis in this study will be four HBCUs located in different parts of the United States. Each university has unique qualities that make them identifiable and prominent in the education community giving each one more substance when answering the main research question of why they are still relevant. The terms Historically Black Colleges and Universities and HBCU were used throughout the study to identify the highlighted cases. As was stated earlier, the four selected universities were designated as HBCU 1, HBCU 2, HBCU 3, and HBCU 4. HBCU 1 is one of the first HBCUs established; HBCU 2 has a predominately

white student body; HBCU 3 was established in its state constitution; and HBCU 4 is internationally known for one of its programs.

In a case study, the researcher determines the unit analysis for data collection by examining groups of individuals who have or are currently participating in an event, activity, or for this study in particular, an organization which is an HBCU (Creswell, 2007). Participants who were interviewed for the study were alumni, associates, and representatives who have worked with the highlighted universities. A sample of approximately 20 participants was invited to participate in the interview process, but 12 participants were selected for the study.

### **Definition of Data Gathering instruments**

The data gathering instruments for a case study consist of multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007). The instruments that were used for this study were documents, archival records, interviews, and observations.

**Documents.** Documents are a vast array of sources that vary in how they are presented (Bryman, 2008). In qualitative research, documents can be presented as personal documents in written or visuals formats, such as diaries, letters or pictures; state documents, such as inquiries containing statistical information; private source documents, which may be created by organizations or foundations; mass-media outputs, such as information found in newspapers, magazines, journals, or films; and virtual documents as would be found on the internet (Bryman, 2008). For this case study, the documents used were state documents from the four states in which each selected HBCU resides; private source documents from external foundations and organizations; mass-media outputs in

the form of magazines, newspapers, and journals; and virtual documents found on the internet pertaining to each case.

**Archival records.** Archival materials are records collected by government organizations or other entities, found in books, files, or in the mass-media, and can be historical information (Bryman, 2008). The archived records used for this study were from government records such as state constitutions and minutes from legislature sessions. Foundations with statistical information about each university were also reviewed. Records from organizations with extensive historical collections were examined, as well as records found in newspapers, magazines, and journals, either hard copies or on the internet.

**Interviews.** The interviewing process is a “series of steps” (Creswell, 2007, p. 132) in order to gather information. In this process, some of the steps include the following:

1. Interviewees must be identified using purposeful sampling.
2. The type of interview must be determined, and the determination is based on what is most practical such as interviewing by telephone, in a focus group, or in-person one-on-one.
3. Recording devices may be used.
4. An interview protocol may be used to focus the interview, such as using a form with the interview questions so that during the interview the researcher can write down the comments from the interviewee.
5. An adequate location for conducting the interviews is ideal so that distractions are minimal and recordings can be clear.

6. Before the interview begins, the interviewer should have the interviewee complete a consent form so the interviewer has permission from the interviewee to participate in the study.
7. Throughout the interview process, the interviewer must focus on the questions designed for the study and complete the interview in a timely manner. Being respectful of the interviewee's time. (Creswell, 2007).

For this study, the researcher had a purposive sampling of interview participants with 20 individuals asked to participate and 12 selected. The participants were alumni, associates, and representatives who have worked with the four universities. Because all of the selected universities are located outside of the state of California, and many alumni reside close to where they attended college, most of the interviews were conducted by telephone, with follow-up questions either conducted by phone or email. There were some exceptions to the phone interviews where in-person one-on-one interviews took place. The interview comments were recorded and notes were written by the interviewer during the interview. The phone interviews took place in a location free from distractions and noise, and the in-person interviews took place in a convenient and distraction-free location for the alumni, associates, and representatives. All interviewees were asked to complete a consent form before the interview began, and the time was monitored so as not to impose on the kindness of the interviewee granting permission to be interviewed (see Appendix B). In addition to the consent form, the interviewees received a list of seven interview questions with subsections under three of the questions in order to clarify their responses to the initial question that was being asked (see Appendix C). These questions were sent to the interviewee prior to the interview so that he or she would have

an opportunity to review the questions so that during the interview the participant's time would be efficiently used, and the interview could proceed smoothly.

**Observations.** It was not possible for the interviewer to travel to the out-of-state locations where some of the interviewees resided, but for those who resided locally, the interviewer conducted in-person interviews in which observations from the perspective of the interviewer were part of the research data. According to Merriam (1998), observations can be anything seen by an interviewer, but there are some elements that should be included. These elements are the physical setting or environment where the case is located or the interview is conducted, the characteristics of the participants, the interactions and activities of the people in the location researched, the verbal inflections and non-verbal behavior during the interview, subtle occurrences such as unplanned activities that arise during the interview, and the behavior and thoughts of the interviewer during the interview process (Merriam, 1998). These observations were an essential part of the interview process and were recorded by the interviewer in a journal for later reflection to support responses to questions answered by the participants.

### **Validity of Data Gathering Instrument**

According to Bryman (2008), validity determines whether an indicator or many indicators that have been developed to test a concept actually measures that concept. Validity comes in two forms, internal validity, which shows how accurate the information is in relation to reality, and external validity, which relates to the findings in the study and how generalizable they are (Bryman, 2008; Creswell; 1994; Merriam, 1998). In qualitative research, there are six strategies that can be used to enhance internal validity:



1. Triangulation: having multiple sources of data, individuals, and methods to confirm findings,
2. Member checks: using the interpretation of the data and going back to the individuals from where it was extrapolated and asking if the results were reasonable,
3. Long-term observation: gathering data over a period of time at a particular site or of a specific phenomenon in order to substantiate the validity of the findings,
4. Peer examination: asking for comments from colleagues during the evaluation of the findings,
5. Participatory or collaborative modes of research: having the participants engaged in the research from inception of the study to the findings, and
6. Researcher's biases: allowing the researcher to explain his or her assumptions, worldview, and theories about the study in the beginning of the research process (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998).

Documents in this case study were deemed valid through triangulation of multiple sources of data from foundations and associated governmental entities and member checks of the individuals who provided information for the study. Archival records are unique in that they are historical markers of events that took place during the phenomenon of how HBCUs began and have continued over the years, so their validity was determined through triangulation and member checks. For the interviews, the questions that the individuals participating in the interview process were asked were deemed valid by a review of the questions by a committee of educators, and the information gained from the interviews was deemed valid through the use of triangulation

and member checks. The observations from the interviews and the environment in which interviews took place were validated through peer examination, member checks, and researcher bias. The external validity of the findings from all of the data instruments used in this study which are the documents, archival records, interviews, and observations, will be deemed valid if they can be applied to other situations. Since the cases studied are universities, more specifically, HBCUs, the findings can be used to study any HBCU and possibly other universities.

### **Reliability of Data Gathering Instrument**

The reliability of data gathering instruments can be determined by the trustworthiness of the research findings and the ability to reproduce the findings at other times (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Merriam, 1998). In a case study in which multiple cases are used, another researcher can “examine whether the same patterns or events or thematic constructs are replicated in different settings” (Creswell, 1994, p. 159). For documents, archival items, interview questions, participant responses, and observations, any researcher should be able to use the same information and receive very similar results using the findings in different settings. The interview responses were recorded and transcribed by the researcher, as well as coded to compare the responses of all interviewed participants. Discrepancies may arise in the responses from the questions or the observations by other researchers, but otherwise, the findings should be very similar in nature.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

In order to analyze the four selected HBCUs, this study used specific data sources to examine each university’s mission, demographics, programs, graduation rates,

accreditation, and accomplishments. Because this is a case study, the data sources were selected from documents found at some universities, foundations, and governmental data reporting agencies; archival records; individuals; and researcher observations. The university documents studied were public documents from different university systems, strategic plans, as well as reports relating to external impacts to the surrounding community, and possibly internationally, which was developed by external entities. The information from data reporting agencies came from government or research foundations, which included statistics collected mostly from surveys. The archival records came from different universities, as well as external sources and authors who have researched HBCUs. The information from individuals were collected through the use of interviews conducted in-person and by phone with follow-up questions answered by phone or electronic mail. Because the researcher was able to interview some of the participants in person, observational notes were taken by the researcher as an observer. The questions were open-ended as to give the participants an opportunity to express themselves more fully, and the researcher was taking notes and recording the interview. The researcher also transcribed and code the interview responses. This multiple-case study, or collective case study, used an embedded analysis as the researcher not only reviewed each university in general, but also focused on the mission, demographics, academic programs, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments for each institution of higher learning.

The data was collected over a month timespan, which included interviews ranging from 15 minutes to one-hour long and observations of the participant during the interviews and of the interview environment, as well as collecting documents and

archival information. Once the interviews were completed, the researcher reviewed the collected information, transcribed and coded the interviews, and compared the interview responses to the documents and archival information collected, as well as contacted the interviewees for possible follow-up questions and clarification of information. To assist in the collection process, the researcher used a log detailing the information collected for each of the four cases and categorized the information in computer files that was only seen by the researcher. In addition, the researcher used a journal to record thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and ideas generated from the observations during the interviews and from interview environment.

### **Description of Proposed Data Analysis Processes**

According to Merriam (1998), simultaneous data collection and analysis occurs both in and out of the field. That is, you can be doing some rudimentary analysis while you are in the process of collecting data, as well as between data collection activities...” (Merriam, p. 162). Some suggested ways to analyze data while collecting at the same time are as follows:

1. The researcher begins by making the decision to narrow the study by focusing on a given topic or subject in order to become more productive when forming the final analysis. The subject is the relevance of HBCUs, and the specifics of the subject are the mission, demographics, programs, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments.
2. The researcher must clearly decide what kind of study to conduct, whether it is a full description of or theorizing about an aspect of a topic, setting, or subject. For each case, there will be a full description of the mission,

demographics, programs, graduation rates, accreditation and accomplishments, but the description was narrowed to information collected and studied within the most recent year.

3. The researcher must develop analytic questions. For this study, the analytic questions were the research questions, in addition to the questions that were asked of the participating interviewees.
4. The researcher must plan data collection sessions. These sessions took place after the collection of specific information for the mission, demographics, programs, graduation rates, accreditation and accomplishments in each case in order to make comparisons.
5. The researcher must write down observations throughout the process in order to think more critically.
6. The researcher must write memos to help keep focused on the study while at the same time reflecting on issues raised.
7. The researcher must think about using alternate ideas and themes on the subjects as may be mentioned by an interviewee during an interview. This information could help to fill in gaps and advance the analysis.
8. The researcher should begin to review literature to enhance analysis. For this study, the researcher had already begun to review literature regarding HBCUs and specific universities as seen in the literature review of Chapter Two, but additional literature was reviewed throughout the study.

9. The researcher should use metaphors, analogies, and concepts to link similar relationships and occurrences. In this study, the researcher's observances of each case were analyzed for similarities.
10. The researcher should use visual devices in order to bring clarity to the analysis. Flow charts and tables were part of the analysis process to clarify similar concepts, along with the interweaving of subject matters.

Ultimately, the coding of the data was used to easily retrieve specific pieces of data, so the analysis was made possible through category construction. "Category construction begins with reading the first interview transcript, the first set of field notes, and the first document collected in the study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 181). After reviewing the information from every interview, the categories will begin to form from the data and should reflect the purpose of the research by answering the research questions, placing all relevant data in categories or subcategories, refining categories if a unit of data can be placed in more than one category, and being exact about the category concepts (Merriam, 1998). For this qualitative study, the coding process may begin by using index cards, then progressing to file folders, and then using a computer program to help store, sort, and retrieve the data (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Because this is a case study with multiple cases, the challenge was collecting and analyzing information that is contradictory, but data management was the key to overcoming this obstacle starting first by analyzing each case using within-case analysis and finishing by using cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998).

### Sample Tables for Proposed Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data collected, tables were helpful to visualize the information. Sample tables that were used consisted of analyzing each case or university separately by using the statistical data regarding demographics, enrollment, and graduation rates collected from documents and archival records.

Table 1

*Example: HBCU 2011 Statistical Information*

HBCUs	Undergrad Enrollment	Student/Faculty Ratio	Female Students	Male Students	Freshman Acceptance Rate	Graduation Rate – 4 years	Graduation Rate – 6 years
HBCU 1							
HBCU 2							
HBCU 3							
HBCU 4							

Table 2

*Example: HBCU 2011 Undergraduate Enrollment by Race*

HBCUs	African-Americans	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asians	Caucasians	Latinos	Two or more races	Race or ethnicity unknown	Non-resident alien
HBCU 1								
HBCU 2								
HBCU 3								
HBCU 4								

**Plans for IRB**

The researcher of this qualitative research multi-case study used all methods available to ensure the highest of ethical standards throughout the research process avoiding information that may have been misleading and plagiarized. To ensure that all ethical standards were followed to guarantee the protection of individuals participating in this research, the researcher followed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines for Pepperdine University. “Researchers need to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems” (Creswell, 2009, p. 87; Isreal & Hay, 2006). This study was reviewed and approved by the Pepperdine University IRB committee before subjects were asked to sign consent forms to agree to their participation in the study. Once approved for continued research, purposively selected individuals were asked to sign consent forms to allow the researcher to interview them for the study. In the consent form, there was full disclosure of the researcher’s identity, the sponsoring institution, the selection process of the interviewees, the purpose of the research, the benefits of participating, the type of involvement that was asked of the interviewee, risks, confidentiality guarantees, the option of withdrawing at any time, and contact persons for questions about the entire process (Creswell, 2009). All individuals were kept confidential throughout the entire study, and they were all given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. All documentation and recordings of the interviews will continue to be protected by the researcher according to IRB guidelines.



**Summary**

This study was a culmination of the history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, how they have evolved since their inception, and why they are still relevant today. Using a qualitative method for this multi-case study, the researcher focused on four HBCUs designated as HBCU 1, HBCU 2, HBCU 3, and HBCU 4, which have unique qualities, and investigated their missions, demographics, academic programs, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments to determine whether they are still relevant in higher education. The research questions examined issues such as mission modernization, public perceptions, media attention or lack thereof, the possible need to eliminate some HBCUs, and the role of HBCU leaders or representatives and how they plan to address these issues. Documents, archival records, interviews, and researcher observations were used to gather data with triangulation, member checks, peer evaluation, researcher biases, and generalizability validating the research instruments and findings. Reliability will be determined by the ability to replicate the findings using the same research data as was collected. The data collection and analysis process was done simultaneously through category construction and specific coding into categories and subcategories. Tables and charts were used to visualize the data findings. With approval from Pepperdine University's IRB committee, consent from purposively selected individuals for the interviews, and the assurance of using a high standard of ethics in the research process, this study should be one of enlightenment for those who read it and understanding for those who have questioned why HBCUs are still relevant.

### **Chapter 4. Data Analysis and Findings**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this research is a qualitative case study of four Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which are identified as HBCU 1, HBCU 2, HBCU 3, and HBCU 4. These four institutions of higher learning have unique qualities that have been examined to determine whether they are considered still relevant. The criteria used to determine relevance are mission statements, academic programs, demographics, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments. It has been stated in many articles that one of the issues regarding HBCUs is that they have problems with accreditation. According to the Department of Education White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, out of the 105 HBCUs that they list, there are 100 that are accredited and only five that are not accredited (see Appendix A) (USDOE, 2013). When looking at the graduation rates and comparing HBCUs to non-HBCUs, the average graduation rate across the country for all colleges and universities is 55.5 percent after attending a college or university for six years (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems [NCHEMS], 2013). As of 2012, the graduation rates after six years at HBCUs range from 79 percent at Spelman College to 10 percent at the University of the District of Columbia (“Tracking Graduation Rates at HBCUs”, 2012). These statistics, in addition to those found below describing the four selected HBCUs, were used to compare the universities with each other and the national average.

Table 3

*HBCU 2011 Statistical Information*

HBCUs	Undergrad Enrollment	Student/Faculty Ratio	Female Students	Male Students	Freshman Acceptance Rate	Graduation Rate – 4 years	Graduation Rate – 6 years
HBCU 1	1,100	16:1	52%	48%	80.86%	13%	24%
HBCU 2	2,800	15:1	58%	42%	62.39%	7%	25%
HBCU 3	6,800	17:1	60%	40%	40.14%	11%	34%
HBCU 4	2,700	12:1	57%	43%	64.51%	15%	43%

*Note.* Information was compiled from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS, 2013) and U.S. News & World Report Historically Black Colleges and Universities rankings (USNEWS, 2013).

Table 4

*HBCU 2011 Undergraduate Enrollment by Race*

HBCUs	African-Americans	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asians	Caucasians	Latinos	Two or more races	Race or ethnicity unknown	Non-resident alien
HBCU 1	93%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	3%	0%
HBCU 2	13%	1%	1%	61%	1%	0%	24%	0%
HBCU 3	87%	0%	2%	2%	4%	2%	1%	1%
HBCU 4	87%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	1%

*Note.* Information was compiled from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS, 2013) and U.S. News & World Report Historically Black Colleges and Universities rankings (USNEWS, 2013).

After reviewing the description of the four selected HBCUs to be studied, and since this is a qualitative study, this researcher began to search for individuals to interview who were alumni that either graduated from or attended the four specific

HBCUs or were alumni from other HBCUs and had an affiliation with the four specific universities in terms of recruiting, interviewing or hiring students from those universities, as well as working with or on the identified campuses. While in the process of researching about Historically Black Colleges and Universities and determining who would be ideal candidates for interviews, there was a question raised by the Institutional Review Board regarding possible objectivity since the initial selection process was one of a purposive sampling of individuals who were associated with the four specific HBCUs and HBCUs in general through alumni, agencies, associations, organizations, and foundations. The issue was that because these individuals have a direct or indirect association with the specified HBCUs, then their opinions would be similar or they would have like minds as to the relevance of these universities. The purpose of this study was to examine the relevance of HBCUs by talking to those who knew something about the four specified HBCUs and HBCUs in general, and that would be difficult to do by interviewing those who have little knowledge about these colleges and universities. By selecting individuals who have knowledge about HBCUs, and more specifically, the four identified ones, then those who read this study can understand the basis of the opinions by those who were interviewed, whether those opinions are positive, negative, or bias.

During the process of identifying individuals who could be interviewed, this researcher initially made a list of individuals to contact. Some of the individuals were employees at the universities and some were HBCU graduates. During the process, it was decided to only target individuals who were alumni or associates that had a direct or indirect connection to the four HBCUs or HBCUs in general because there was a chance of bias on the part of the employees since they had a vested interest in how their

particular HBCU would be viewed, and, they would be considered paid representatives of their particular university. Instead, the selected potential individuals to be interviewed were alumni who may have positive or negative experiences from attending an HBCU so there would be greater objectivity. There were more than 20 alumni members contacted from the four universities, as well as other HBCUs, who were contacted to participate in the interview. All of the individuals contacted were excited about the subject of this dissertation, and agreed to the interviews, but when it was time to begin the interview process, some of the individuals did not respond so additional people had to be contacted. For the final selection of those to be interviewed, there were 12 people who were contacted, agreed to the interview, and followed through with the commitment. The demographics of those 12 are as follows: all 12 individuals were HBCU graduates, but two-thirds of the individuals were representatives of the four selected universities, and the remaining one-third had an affiliated connection to the four either by working with the universities, working with individuals from the universities, or recruiting, interviewing, or hiring students from those HBCUs. The ages of the individuals range from their mid-20s to their early 70s. Of all those interviewed, nine out of twelve had advanced degrees, and one individual was in the process of working on an advanced degree. An interesting factor was that even though all of those interviewed were HBCU graduates, not all of them graduated from an HBCU as an undergraduate student. One of the individuals went to a non-HBCU for undergraduate studies and then attended an HBCU for graduate studies. This was a very different dynamic, and the opinions conveyed through answering the research questions made for a very interesting study.

After the interviews were completed, this researcher transcribed the recordings of all of the interviews. To comply with internal validity of the information collected during the interviews through member checks, each participant received the transcript from his or her interview and was asked to review the information to make sure that it was accurate and to see if he or she wanted to change their statements by either deleting some of the information or adding to the information to elaborate on certain areas. The result was that the participants had very few changes, and the majority of the information collected was accurate by their standards. Triangulation was used during the interviews by providing data to the participants from the universities, foundations, and associated governmental entities as found in documents and archives so that the individuals would have a basis to discuss certain items, such as campus demographics for gender and race, as well as mission statements, accreditation status, acceptance rates, enrollment, and graduation rates. Because two-thirds of the interviews took place by phone and one-third took place in person, this researcher made observations during the in-person interviews. For each observation, the participant seemed to be excited about describing their experiences at their HBCU. In most instances, the participants decided to elaborate on each question asked and provide not just opinions about the topics discussed, but also stories about people they knew who also attended their institution, and how their friends, relatives, or acquaintances experiences related to the topic discussed.

### **Coding of Case Studies**

During the transcribing and coding of the interviews, certain themes were discovered and determined by reviewing each case or HBCU. The coding began by printing out all of the transcripts and separating the transcripts into the four cases, with

those who did not attend the four HBCUs having a separate category for their general information that pertained to the four HBCUs and HBCUs in general. Through the analysis of the content, codes were created. After reviewing the codes created for each research question for each case from the interview responses, themes were developed. Certain terminology began to repeat as this researcher dissected the responses to each question asked and created the themes. Some of the themes were similar and some were different when it came to using cross-case theme analysis. To review, the research questions are as follows:

1. Are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) still relevant?
2. Does the mission of each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, need to be completely changed or revamped and modernized?
3. What are the perceptions of the brand for each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general?
4. Has the communication between the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, and the media been adequate to effectively publicize their accomplishments?
5. Has the need for HBCUs in general been reduced so that some of the existing institutions should close?
6. What are the leaders or representatives of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, doing to change the public's perceptions as to the relevance of their learning institutions?

### **Within-Case Theme Analysis**

The coding process began by separating the interview transcripts and categorizing them by case. Each case had at least one transcript with answers to each research

question. Because a few of those who were interviewed worked with or were associated with the four HBCUs in some way, they had a general category of their own, which will be discussed first so that the general data can be analyzed first before moving to the specifics of each case.

**Question 1: Are Historically Black College and Universities still relevant?**

According to the general data from the associates of the HBCUs, their answer to question one regarding relevance had several themes. These themes dealt with: preparation, impact, and program resources. They felt that Historically Black Colleges and Universities are still relevant because through preparation, they nurture students, help them mature, and prepare them to be successful in their undergraduate education, future pursuits of their graduate education, and careers by giving them an extra push towards excellence. The interviewees felt that this was impactful because the institutions, being such a significant entity in the lives of the students, focused on the whole student as a person and not a number, and along with the one-on-one understanding between the students and instructors, as well as connections made with classmates and outside entities through the HBCU, the students would have an assurance that they could make a difference in society. During the interviews, there was an issue that arose with program resources. One interviewee felt that the graduate program she was in may not have been the best because the students did not receive the same necessary resources that the undergraduate school received, and the interviewee felt that the graduate school she was a part of was mostly for those who could not be accepted at larger colleges or universities.

***HBCU 1.*** For HBCU 1, there was only one theme for Question 1: empowering.

The data collected revealed that HBCU 1 was still relevant because it gave students a



foundation to excel. The classes were informative with powerful and inspiring instructors. The campus gave students a sense of security which made them feel loved and cared for.

***HBCU 2.*** For HBCU 2, two themes emerged: educational environment and legacy. This university was considered still relevant by those interviewed because they felt that the educational environment of the university provided some of the best education that a student could receive. It was a comfortable environment to learn, and just because it was an HBCU, there was no advantage or disadvantage, but each student was responsible for succeeding in their own course of study. One interviewee stated that it would be wonderful if the students attended the university because it had the subjects that they wanted to study, but if the university does not provide that, then the student should go where he or she will be happy and succeed. He also stated that this HBCU may not be the best place for all students, but if a student likes what the university is offering, then the student will succeed. The second theme, legacy, was very strong because, as discussed during the interviews, there were many students that the interviewees knew of, including one of the interviewees himself, who were from families that had many generations of family members attend HBCU 2. The idea of having family legacies attend the university was also a part of their reasoning for relevance with continued family support from generation to generation.

***HBCU 3.*** HBCU 3 had three strong themes: accepting, understanding, and successful. This university was considered still relevant by those interviewed because the university has been very accepting of all students. Even though the institution may be predominantly African-American, all students of diverse backgrounds are welcome and

encouraged to attend, and they would not be viewed as a number, but as a person. With the small class sizes and one-on-one attention by the instructors, the students feel that there are people on campus who care about them and understand their needs. The professors and administrators want the students to succeed so that they can go into the world and make positive contributions to society.

**HBCU 4.** HBCU 4 had one main theme: advancement. This university was considered still relevant because it gave students the opportunity to further their education and advance with undergraduate and graduate degrees. This institution identified each student as a person and not a number, and because of the connections the students made, they were able to find better employment than would be expected from an HBCU graduate.

**Question 2: Does the mission of each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, need to be completely changed or revamped and modernized?** According to the HBCU associates interviewed, the missions of HBCUs in general should focus on: preparation, marketing, and organizational improvement. They stated that even though some of the university mission statements mention that part of their purpose is to prepare students to enter the world by educating them and cultivating them in order to further advance students socially and financially, there are still some improvements that need to be made within the institution and should be reflected in the mission. Since most HBCUs are predominantly African-American, the universities need to do a better job marketing outside of the East Coast and the South where most HBCUs are located. In addition, the universities should do more outreach to predominantly non-ethnic communities. Even though diversity is mentioned in the mission statements, the ideas need to be

implemented. The organizational structure of the universities was mentioned in relation to problems with how services are administered to students. The interviewees stated that the mission statements may not need to be completely revamped, but some of the ways things are done on the campuses may need to be improved and modernized.

***HBCU 1.*** The mission statement for HBCU 1 was discussed by those interviewed, and the findings reflected a specific theme of: tradition in training. The data showed that even though changes may have taken place over the years and the mission may have been changed, there is still something that is worth holding on to, tradition, which will always apply to life. The tradition that was referred to was how to train young people, and even though times have changed, some basics remain the same, and the basics of educating and training young people should remain in a mission statement and should not be changed or excluded.

***HBCU 2.*** It was interesting when analyzing the theme for HBCU 2 in Question 2. Those interviewed had a conflicting theme which was: to modernize or not to modernize. One believed that the current mission statement was solid, and it should not be modernized because the mission has been keeping up with the times. On the other hand, it was mentioned that there is room to modernize the mission statement and school goals. Because excellence is a tradition, and the university should always strive for excellence, the idea of modernizing or not modernizing the mission is still up for debate.

***HBCU 3.*** For HBCU 3, the mission statement's theme was: inclusive. The findings showed that the mission should not be changed because it is keeping up with the times, especially in regards to technology. It also promotes having an inclusive environment with a diverse student body. The only concern was the execution of the

mission. It was mentioned that every component of the mission should be implemented or carried out and not just written for appearances only.

**HBCU 4.** Once again for HBCU 4, the recognized theme is: advancement. The findings showed that this university's mission statement should stay traditional when discussing the education of students, but there could be some modifications. The changes would include moving ahead with technology, identify a better way to handle the financial aid process, and to get "caught up" with non-HBCUs, so when students graduate, they can be employed.

**Question 3: What are the perceptions of the brand for each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general?** The findings gathered from the HBCU associates regarding perception and branding of HBCUs was segmented into seven parts. Those parts are demographics, academics, intellectual ability, financial stability, financial support, low graduation rates, and accreditation issues. The themes that emerged from the seven parts were: comparable, diversity, and increased support. Starting with demographics, the perception of the HBCU brand in general was that these institutions educate mostly African-American students who are female, and that there is little diversity, when only part of that is true. There is a larger number of females than males attending the HBCUs, but those interviewed specifically mentioned that most HBCU campuses are very diverse and open for all races to attend.

Regarding academics, the perceptions were that the departments were not strong, but the findings showed that these institutions are comparable to any other colleges and universities, and some Business and Communication Departments were specifically mentioned. There was an issue that arose during the interviews about academics, and it

was discussed that even though the specified departments are academically sound, there are still some things that are lacking, such as more resources for the students, which translated into increased support is needed for the departments.

The perception of the intellectual ability of the students was that students attending HBCUs were not as intelligent because these were the only schools where they could be accepted. The interviewees stated that the truth was the students who attended HBCUs were intellectuals who were comparable to students at other non-HBCUs. When they were attending these college and universities, they found it inspiring to see so many students, especially African-American students, in the libraries learning and realizing their full potential. They made it known that many HBCUs have notable alumni of diverse backgrounds who have achieved great things, and these alumni are proud to say they attended an HBCU.

The financial stability of the students attending HBCUs was perceived as poor and struggling. In reality, the interviews revealed that the economic stability of the students ranged from struggling students to students who came from families with financial means and status. Actually, the interviewees mentioned that this range would be similar or comparable to students at any other colleges and universities.

As for financial support for HBCUs, the perception was that it is harder for HBCUs to get funding, and they are always in trouble financially. While this may be the case for some HBCUs, as stated by the interviewees, not all of them have this issue. It was mentioned that there are many opportunities for the colleges and universities to receive financial support, especially from corporations and foundations that see the need and want to support the communities. It was observed during the interviews that there

was frustration in the voices of some of those interviewed when discussing the alumni and financial support. It was stated that the alumni do not give back as much as they should or as much as the universities would like for them to give. The universities should be persistent when asking for support or increased support from the alumni.

The perception regarding low graduation rates was that males had a more difficult time graduating than the females. The reality was that those interviewed did not have any comparative data to make the determination of what is considered low, but they did recognize that HBCUs have a very social atmosphere that can deter students from focusing on their studies, which could be a reason for the low graduation rates after four or six years. It was also mentioned that after four years, ambitions may begin to wander, and the students get caught up in the educational system of trying to figure out late in their studies what they need to do to graduate, which may also account for low graduation rates.

Lastly, the perception regarding HBCU accreditation issues was discussed. The perception was that most HBCUs have problems with their accreditation or do not have any accreditations. The reality was that some smaller HBCUs, actually, only two were mentioned, have had accreditation problems, but the problems were not academic related; they were mostly management and administration problems. At those specific universities, the students had to leave, but other HBCUs were very supportive and welcomed those students to attend without a problem. The interviewees stated that this acceptance of students from other HBCUs may not have taken place at non-HBCUs.

***HBCU 1.*** The perceptions of the brand for HBCU 1 produced the following themes: high expectations/excellence, diversity, support, and pride. Starting with the

demographics, it was perceived that the students were mostly African-American with a majority of females. The assumption was that the women were attending college to find a husband, which was considered insulting. In reality, the campus was very diverse and welcomed students of all races, and even though there were fewer males on campus, male students from neighboring campuses visited this university regularly for academics and social events. As for academics, the perception from an interviewee was that the academic standards were higher than most universities because the professors expected excellence and did not want the students to go out into the world and embarrass them (the professors). The perception of the intellectual ability of the students may have been that the African-American students at this university may not be as intelligent as the students from the non-HBCUs. As stated earlier, the professors had high expectations for the students and did not expect anything less than excellence. They were concentrating on creating quality products, which were their students. The perception of a student's financial stability from those interviewed was that students came from all walks of life to attend the university. The economic status of the students was very diverse. Some students could not afford to live on campus, but others had parents who were teachers and doctors. All of the students carried themselves with dignity and respect, so no one could identify who was struggling financially and who was economically secure. The perception of financial support for the university from the data collected seemed to be that alumni could do more for the university. The problem was that some alumni may be willing to support because they are proud to say they attended HBCU 1, but others seemed to be embarrassed to say they attended the university. When introducing low graduation rates, those interviewed stated that when students need support and they are

struggling academically and financially, it is hard to keep them focused to remain at the university, which may account for low graduation rates. The perception regarding accreditation issues was not really a perception but reality because in the past, the university had a problem with accreditation due to finances, not academics. Now that the issues have been resolved for many years, rumors have begun to spread about more accreditation problems, but that is not the case. It seems that when an issue has taken place in the past, some people do not want to believe the issue has been resolved, and that is when rumors begin. Instead of alumni being supportive of the university, some are perpetuating the rumors, and that can be detrimental to the university.

***HBCU 2.*** For HBCU 2, the themes that surfaced were: diversity, partnerships, personal responsibility, and mentoring. For the demographics, the interviewees discussed that the perceptions of their HBCU are that it is composed of mostly African-Americans, but the reality is that it is a predominantly Caucasian. As was explained to this researcher, the demographics reflect the composition of the state, and even though the campus is very diverse, the majority of the students at this HBCU are Caucasian. The perception regarding academics is that they are poor, but in reality, those interviewed believed that the school is like the “Harvard of the South.” It was discussed that students must take responsibility for their education. Every program may not be set up with exactly the types of courses students are looking for, but students must be able to adapt to the program and complete the requirements for graduation. The perception of the intellectual ability of the students is that they attend the university to be a part of the social atmosphere, to party, to have fun, and to go to sporting events. In reality, students must be intellectually astute, responsible, and mature, and this intellectual preparation



comes from home. The perception of the financial stability of the students is that they are mostly broke, and they have to work to get where they are going. This may be a perception, but there is some truth behind it because some of the students are struggling and have to take personal responsibility for their finances. For financial support of the university, the perception is that there is not much support going to the university. In reality, there is a new president that has been recruiting corporate partners to support the university and its programs. The corporations, individuals, and other institutions see the mission of the university, and they are willing to give back. Those interviewed stated they do not give as much as they should, and they must do better. The perception of low graduation rates was not viewed as a perception by those interviewed, they were accepted as reality. The low rates were explained by the university needing to build stronger relationships with the students and mentor them, especially since the HBCU is a commuter institution. In addition to separating themselves from the campus activities as commuters, students will take a few classes and then transfer to other colleges and universities, which can account for the low graduation rates. When discussing accreditation, those interviewed only stated that the university's status was good.

***HBCU 3.*** The themes found in Question 3 for HBCU 3 were: diverse, support, and legacy. The perception of the demographics was that the students were mostly African-American and female. The reality is that the majority of the students are African-American and female, but the campus has become more diverse. The perception regarding academics is that the university provides an inferior education, but according to those interviewed, the reality is that the curriculum and the instructors are excellent. Not only do the students learn about a legacy of culture and heritage, but they are also trained

in book knowledge and life lessons. The perceptions about a student's intellectual ability were that a student attending HBCU 3 may not smart enough to get into other colleges or universities. The truth is that those who were interviewed were impressed by how intelligent the students at the university are, and it was inspiring to see. The perceptions of the financial stability of students at the university were that they came from low income families, but the reality was that many of the students have a family legacy of attending the university, and they come from all different economic backgrounds but due to the current economy, many students are struggling financially and need financial aid. The perception of financial support as stated by those interviewed was an assumption that if you attended a university, then you were a supporter of that university, but that is not always the case. In order for the university to continue to prosper, it must receive support from alumni, individuals, corporations, and foundations. Corporations and other entities have helped to fund many programs at HBCU 3, but it has been difficult to get the alumni to give back and support the university. The interviewees stated all of these sources (individuals, alumni, corporations, and foundations) could give more back to the university. There was no perception regarding low graduation rates because in reality the rates are low, but the reasoning behind the low rates was questioned. Some rationalized that the students did not complete their studies because of financial hardship, family issues, or academic failure. The reasoning is not clear, but these are possible causes for the low graduation rates as given by the interviewees. As for accreditation issues, all of those interviewed stated there were no problems at the university regarding accreditation.

***HBCU 4.*** The themes found in Question 3 for HBCU 4 are: survival and strong support. The perception of the demographics for HBCU 4 is that most of the students are

African-American, but the reality is that the campus is multi-cultural with international students. The perception of the academics is that it is lower than other colleges and universities, but in reality, it is comparable to other universities. The perception of the intellectual ability of the students is that they are not prepared for the real world, but the university has a saying, *If you can survive this university and other HBCUs, then you can survive anywhere*. The perceptions about a student's financial stability at HBCU 4 have been negative. The majority of the students at this university is on financial aid and receives loans, scholarships, and grants. When the university does not receive a lot of funding, then the students suffer. So, the financial support of the university must be increased by receiving funding from corporations, the state, or alumni, although the alumni are very supportive of this university. The graduation rates of HBCU 4 are low, but compared to other HBCUs the rates are high. Most of the students graduate between five and six years after entering the university. According to those interviewed, there are no accreditation issues at this university.

**Question 4: Has the communication between the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, and the media been adequate to effectively publicize their accomplishments?** The individuals associated with the HBCUs stated that the communication with the media has not been adequate enough. It was mentioned that during certain times of the year, such as Black History Month, positive anecdotes about HBCUs are publicized, but throughout the rest of the year, very little is promoted in the media, except for sports. One interviewee stated that HBCUs need active public relation efforts to promote positive activities that take place at the colleges and universities. To better understand what is taking place at these institutions, the interviewees were asked to

identify major HBCU accomplishments, significant programs, and information about accreditation. The findings for major accomplishments showed that there are many notable alumni who have graduated from HBCUs in the Business, Nursing, Pharmacy, Communications, Medical, Law, Dental, and Engineering Departments. Most of these departments were also listed as significant programs, in addition to graduate school feeder programs, internships, and career preparation and placement programs. As stated earlier by the interviewees, accreditation for the majority of HBCUs is secure, but there may be a few of the smaller institutions that have had issues.

***HBCU 1.*** The theme for Question 4 reflecting the status of HBCU 1 and the media is: suspicious. Those interviewed stated that communication between HBCU 1 and the media is not adequate, and what makes things worse is that the media will place reporters on the campus to find something negative to report, which would make it very difficult for this university to have something positive reported unless the report came from the campus. Some of the major accomplishments mentioned were the beautiful campus and the notable alumni. Significant programs identified were their Music Program and Honors Program, and the university's accreditation status is good.

***HBCU 2.*** The theme for HBCU 2 regarding communication with the media is: self-promotion. Those interviewed did not feel that the media does a good job promoting this university, so the university is sending out their own information quarterly and also placing the information on their website. Some of the major accomplishments discussed were gaining university status, offering graduate degrees, staying competitive, having an online curriculum, being a part of a legacy of family members who are alumni, and having a new president who has a vision to elevate the university. The significant

programs mentioned were the Science, Technology, and Math-based programs; Communications Department; the Media Arts, Movie Sciences, and Film Department, and the Business Department with a fraternal organization that recruits students who want to become entrepreneurs. The accreditation status of the university is good.

***HBCU 3.*** The theme for HBCU 3 is also self-promotion because those interviewed did not believe the media has been sending out positive information about this institution. Most of the publicity has been sports related and negative. It was stated that the media does not care about the accomplishments of the university, and many people in the media are not HBCU supporters, so the positive dissemination of information must come from the university and be passed to the alumni to distribute. Some of the major accomplishments from this university are the fact that it produces a large number of engineers and nurses, as well as military generals, and has received endowments for specific departments. The significant programs mentioned were Engineering, Nursing, Math, Science, and Education Departments, as well as the Career Placement Center. The accreditation of this university is also in good status.

***HBCU 4.*** The theme for HBCU 4 under communication with the media is: positive. Those interviewed stated that there has been a lot of positive publicity about this university. Because there are HBCU grads working in the media, they are giving back by saying positive things and promoting the university. The major accomplishments identified were notable alumni and speakers who come to the campus, as well as having one of their programs turned into a feature film. Significant programs mentioned were Engineering, Agriculture, Business Administration, Management,

Hospitality Management, Biology, Psychology, and Education. The accreditation status of this university is also good.

**Question 5: Has the need for HBCUs in general been reduced so that some of the existing institutions should close?** Interview questions five and six were combined to answer this research question regarding a possible reduced need for the HBCUs. According to the associates of the HBCUs, there are some concerns about enrollment, demographics, graduation rates, and financial support for HBCUs. In general, HBCUs are struggling with enrollment because of competition from other colleges and universities. Even though they are trying to increase enrollment, they must make sure that they are being inclusive with outreach to the greater community and provide enough housing for all students who have been accepted to a particular college or university. The concern about demographics is that they need to be more balanced between men and women, along with the inclusion of other races. Better marketing is needed to help promote and encourage others to attend these institutions. As for the graduation rates, the HBCUs must try to understand the reasoning behind the low rates, whether they are due to financial problems, academic failure, personal circumstances, the need for career guidance, lack of mentoring, or simply because the students want to do well at the college or university and want to take their time, and the universities must find ways to help the students so that they can graduate sooner rather than later. In terms of financial support, there is a concern that the alumni should give more back to their alma maters, but there needs to be a strong campaign to push people to give. It is difficult to find private investors, but when support is provided, it would be appreciated if the funding was given to more than just one department or program. The need for HBCUs is

still there, because there will always be a need to nurture and build self-esteem. Each HBCU was established for a specific purpose, and that purpose may need to be rebranded for more inclusion or to change with the times, but to reduce the number of HBCUs is not an option.

***HBCU 1.*** The theme for Question 5 regarding HBCU 1 is: the perception of the need. According to those interviewed, there are concerns about the enrollment for this university because the children of those who are alumni do not want to attend and carry on the family tradition or legacy. Some reasons may be that the programs the students want are not offered, or, because of bad experiences in the past with members of their own race, they do not want to attend an institution that is majority African-American, or, students want to transfer, in which case all of these reasons would reduce the enrollment. The demographics and graduation rates are a concern because more males need to be recruited at this university to remain and graduate. It is also a concern that the alumni is not supporting like they should. Even with these concerns, the need for HBCU 1 has not been reduced; the issue is that “the perception of the need is probably reduced.”

***HBCU 2.*** The theme for HBCU 2, along with the concerns and needs for this university, is: numbers vs. quality. The concern for enrollment has been that students are more interested in attending a university for partying and social gatherings which would affect the quality of the students applying and attending. Instead of the institution being concerned about the number of students, maybe they should be more concerned about the quality of the students attending. Even though this is a business and the greater the number of students, the more revenue that will be brought into the university, but looking at dwindling enrollment and low graduation rates, there must be a way to get a student to

commit to the university and receive their degree without waiting six years or more to finish and without taking a break in their academic program. There were no concerns about demographics because the university reflects the state demographics. Financial support is a big concern, and although these interviewees have not been large contributors to their alma mater, they are proud to be a graduate of HBCU 2 and stated they need to do more to support their university. With all of these concerns that need to be addressed, the need for HBCU 2 is still there to educate their surrounding communities.

***HBCU 3.*** The themes found in HBCU 3 for Question 5 are: heritage, legacy, and fostering good experiences. The concerns about enrollment and demographics were explained by those interviewed, and there were four concerns that everyone stated: 1. that even though the university has plans to increase enrollment, there must be enough housing for everyone, 2. the former students who now have children do not encourage their children to attend this university to continue a family legacy and learn more about their heritage, 3. more students of different ethnic backgrounds should be recruited to attend, and 4. there should be a greater push to recruit more male students. The concern about graduation rates was more of a question as to why the graduation rates may be low, and some thoughts they had were that the students had financial problems, they had life-changing experiences, they had to work, they need to take advantage of the online classes available, they need more nurturing and are not ready to leave, or they just wanted to continue to stay in school. For the financial support to the university, the concern was that the alumni do not give as much as they can or should, and if the university wants the alumni to give more, then it should make sure that the current students who are attending the university are fostering good experiences so that in the future they will want to give



back. It was stated that there are many alumni members who do not want to do anything for the university because they had bad experiences on campus, whether it was financial aid or administration related or incidents that happened among the other students.

Whatever the case may be, many alumni do not want to give due to those bad experiences, so the university must make sure it fosters good experiences, so that they can receive future support. Even with the list of concerns stated, there is still a need for HBCU 3 to educate not only African-American students, but students of every race, because according to those interviewed, there are many colleges and universities that are very selective about the students they accept, and HBCU 3 gives students a chance to prove themselves academically before turning them away, unlike many non-HBCUs.

**HBCU 4.** The theme found in HBCU 4 for Question 5 is: a positive outlook. For the enrollment and demographics, those interviewed stated that they are not too concerned about the level of enrollment at this time because the university has plans in place to increase enrollment, and even though the number of men attending the university is less than the number of women, there are also plans to increase the male population, so that within the next couple of years, the number will be closer to equal. As for graduation rates, there is a concern about increasing them, but more importantly, before you can increase the rates, there must be a way to keep the students at the university so retention is also a concern. It was stated earlier that the alumni for HBCU 4 are very supportive, but they can give more, especially to support the athletic department, which helps to bring in money to the university. The need for HBCU 4 is still prevalent, and it is constantly improving and growing to better itself for the sake of the students and the community it is in.

**Question 6: What are the leaders or representatives of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, doing to change the public's perceptions as to the relevance of their learning institutions?** The associates of the HBCUs were very open about what they do to change the public's perception about the relevance of HBCUs. The findings are that most of them campaign for HBCUs, and they described campaigning by saying that they encourage high school students to attend, they share with others what they learned at their alma mater, and they try to convince their friends to send their children to an HBCU. In essence, they saw themselves as a "walking billboard" for their universities showing the public the positive attributes of graduating from an HBCU. All of them stated that they were proud to be a graduate of their HBCU, and they have that information on their resumes and online biographies. But, even when they stated they were proud of their universities, in the same breathe they said that they do not support their universities enough financially, and that was something that they needed to work on.

***HBCU 1.*** For HBCU 1, the theme for Question 6 is: outreach. Those interviewed stated that they were a brand from their alma mater, and when people saw something positive in them, then they were seeing something positive in the university they came from. They also mentioned speaking to the public about HBCU 1 and interacting with different organizations to promote the university.

***HBCU 2.*** For HBCU 2, the theme for Question 6 is: awareness. Before this study, those who were interviewed stated that they always mention their alma mater to people, and give a positive perception of themselves as a reflection of the university, but at the time of the interview, they had not done a lot, if anything at all, to support the

university whether financially or giving of their time, so they stated that this research study was a wake-up call for them to do something to support their university.

***HBCU 3.*** For HBCU 3, the theme for Question 6 is “involved” because all of the alumni interviewed were very involved in supporting their university. They all seem to work with their local alumni chapter and some work with the national alumni association. They stated that they attend high school and college fairs to promote their university and recruit students, as well as have fundraisers so that they can provide scholarships to students who attend HBCU 3. There was one interviewee who stated that he is working with corporations to help them recruit students from HBCU 3 so the students will be employed once they graduate. A couple of the interviewees stated that they felt their everyday life was the greatest example for people to see the positive characteristics that they gained from the university.

***HBCU 4.*** For HBCU 4, the theme for Question 6 is also: outreach. Those interviewed stated that they go out into different communities and promote the positive aspects of their university and encourage students to attend, especially by participating in high school and college fairs and tutoring. They let people know that they graduated from HBCU 4, and they see themselves as a product that promotes the high standards of the university that people can respect.

### **Cross-Case Theme Analysis**

After reviewing all of the research questions, and analyzing each case, there were certain themes that repeated within the same question and in other questions for different cases, which related to answering the main research question of whether HBCUs are still relevant. The themes that were discussed the most throughout all of the questions will be

identified as similar, and the themes that stood out as unique for a particular HBCU will be identified as different.

**Similarities.** The 12 people interviewed had fascinating stories to tell about their experiences with the four specific HBCUs and HBCUs in general. During the interviews, the participants explained how they felt about their alma maters, described the good things, as well as things that needed improving, and gave an overall reason why they felt their university was still relevant.

When reviewing the research questions, most of the similarities in themes for a particular question were found when discussing Question 3, the perceptions of the four HBCUs and HBCUs in general; Question 4, communication between HBCUs and the media; Question 5, concerns about financial support, and Question 6, individually changing the public's perception of HBCUs. The similar themes for Question 3 focused on diversity at the universities and how all four HBCUs have a diverse student body regarding race, gender, and economic status, even though the perceptions were that they are mostly African-American, female, and low income students. Question 3 also discussed the theme "support" referring to financial support of the university by individuals, corporations, foundations, and alumni. All four HBCUs stated that their alumni could do more to support their universities, and this sentiment about the alumni was also expressed in Question 5 when discussing concerns about financial support. In Question 4, the similar theme was "self-promotion" because the interviewees from HBCU 2 and HBCU 3 felt that the media was not promoting positive information about their universities, so their institutions began to self-promote by posting information on their websites and sending information to the alumni. In Question 6, the similar theme

was “outreach” although “involved” had some similar attributes that could be mentioned. “Outreach” and “involved” referred to the person who was interviewed and how he or she was changing the public’s perception about an HBCU or HBCUs in general. The responses for HBCU 1 and HBCU 4 were that these individuals go out into the community and engage in “outreach” to promote their university by speaking at different events, participating in college fairs, and interacting with organizations to recruit students and encourage alumni to support their alma maters. For HBCU 3, the interviewees were very “involved” with the promotion of their alma mater. Not only did they describe how they participate in outreach activities, but they also have fundraisers to help the university and provide scholarships to students, as well as work with corporations to provide students with jobs upon graduation, so the theme “involved” goes a little beyond the idea of “outreach”, but both themes described how individuals were changing the public’s perception about the universities and showing how the public could help support the universities.

**Differences.** Some of the interviewees made comments that were different from what everyone else said about their universities, and these comments were very unique when describing that particular university. The themes that will be mentioned are the ones that are different from the general comments made by the participants. The most unique and different themes were found in Question 3 and Question 5. In Question 3, the unique themes were “personal responsibility” given by an interviewee from HBCU 2 and “survival” stated by an interviewee from HBCU 4. When discussing the perceptions of the HBCU brand, and more specifically, the perceptions regarding academics, the interviewee from HBCU 2 stated that the academics at his university are excellent, but

students have a “personal responsibility” to embrace the curriculum and follow through with the program they selected to study. Every program may not have all of the classes that a student wants, but the student is still responsible for completing that program to the best of their abilities. Also for Question 3, the interviewee from HBCU 4 stated under perceptions about a student’s intellectual ability that if a student can “survive” at his particular university or any HBCU, then that student can survive anywhere, giving the impression that the student must be intellectually astute to attend his alma mater or any HBCU.

Question 5 discussed whether the need for the four HBCUs or HBCUs in general has been reduced to where some should close, and many themes emerged that were unique such as “perception of the need”, “numbers vs. quality”, and “fostering good experiences.” The “perception of the need” was stated by an interviewee from HBCU 1 who felt that there will always be a need, but the “perception of the need” has probably been reduced in the minds of people who say that some HBCUs should close. An interviewee from HBCU 2 mentioned that he had a concern regarding student enrollment, and he understood the need for his university to increase the number of students, since the university is a business, and more students bring more revenue, but he questioned the importance of increased numbers as opposed to the quality of the students, which created the theme “numbers vs. quality.” An interviewee from HBCU 3 was concerned about alumni supporting his university financially, and the comment was made that if the university “fosters good experiences” for the students while they are attending the university, then they will be more likely to support the university financially in the future. This seemed to be a major concern for this interviewee regarding his alma mater.

**Assertions and Generalizations**

Even though there were some similarities and differences with the coding and themes found throughout the four cases or HBCUs, all of the interviewees made certain assertions and generalizations that pertained to all four HBCUs, and possibly HBCUs in general. For HBCU 1, HBCU 2, HBCU 3, and HBCU 4, all of the interviewees mentioned that they were proud to be a graduate when describing their alma maters and thought that their particular university was the best. The interviewees also mentioned throughout their interviews that their universities had “high expectations” for their students to excel in their studies and to be “successful” in life. A couple of the cases mentioned sustaining the university’s “heritage” and encouraging alumni to convince their children to attend their alma maters to continue a family “legacy.” Some of the terms they used may not have been the same, but the sentiment of helping their students “advance” was expressed by all interviewees.

## **Chapter 5. Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

The study of Historically Black Colleges and Universities has been an interesting look back at the history of how these institutions of higher education began, how they evolved, how they intend to stay progressive, and at the same time, help students grow and become successful in the future. The premise and purpose of this study was to determine whether Historically Black Colleges and Universities are still relevant based on the following criteria: mission statements, demographics, academic programs, graduation rates, accreditation, and accomplishments. The research questions for this study were the following:

1. Are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) still relevant?
2. Does the mission of each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, need to be completely changed or revamped and modernized?
3. What are the perceptions of the brand for each of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general?
4. Has the communication between the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, and the media been adequate to effectively publicize their accomplishments?
5. Has the need for HBCUs in general been reduced so that some of the existing institutions should close?
6. What are the leaders or representatives of the four selected HBCUs, or HBCUs in general, doing to change the public's perceptions as to the relevance of their learning institutions?



After reviewing data collected from documents, archival records, interviews from alumni of four selected HBCUs that were the focus of this research, and observations from this researcher of one-third of the alumni interviewed, the findings revealed that even though HBCUs still have some areas that could be improved, as do any other colleges and universities, they are still relevant to the students that they serve and their communities.

To summarize briefly the key findings from this study, if one is strictly looking at numbers, such as demographics and graduation rates, the perceptions may be that these four universities are only serving African-American students who are low income and are not able to get accepted to any other college or university that is not an HBCU. The findings showed that in reality, the four university campuses are very diverse, which is a reflection of their surrounding communities. While those who have contrary opinions about HBCUs, such as politicians, economists, or educators from other colleges and universities, have stated that many of these institutions should be merged together, merged with non-HBCUs, or closed down because of low graduation rates, there are some factors that have not been taken into consideration.

First, many of these HBCUs, including the four that were the focus of this study, may have low graduation rates, as compared to some non-HBCUs, but they have higher freshman acceptance rates. In their mission statements, collectively, they state that they are institutions of higher education that prepare students of diverse racial and economic backgrounds to grow academically and socially through their programs and services which are designed to nurture and elevate a student's knowledge base so that he or she will be ready to enter the workplace and be a productive member of society. Essentially,

these institutions are saying that they welcome diversity to their campuses and they are prepared to help students advance. The high acceptance rates are showing that they will give students a chance to prove themselves academically, whereas other institutions may not be as willing or as accepting because they are solely looking at a student's test scores and GPAs to determine whether they can be accepted into their universities.

There are some HBCU alumni who are concerned about the graduation rates and believe that their alma maters should be more selective in the students that they accept, and during their interviews, they discussed the quandary between higher enrollment numbers vs. quality students. According to one alumnus interviewed, universities are businesses, and the more students they accept, the more revenue that is coming into the universities, which they need to support the departments and academic programs for the students. Each HBCU has its own special qualities, which are reflected in the academic programs that they offer. The strength of the academic programs is one criteria that is used to determine a university's accreditation.

A negative perception of HBCUs is that they all have accreditation problems, but according to the findings, out of the 105 HBCUs listed with the Department of Education's White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, there are only five that are not accredited, and the four universities that were highlighted in this study are all accredited, as well as most of their departments and programs (see Appendix A) (USDOE, 2013). Even with the negative perceptions that have been spread about HBCUs for decades, they have still managed to progress by increasing academic offerings attracting many students who have graduated and become notable alumni who have accomplished great things such as entertainers, politicians, business entrepreneurs

and CEOs, military generals, etc. After researching about the positive and negative aspects of HBCUs in general and focusing on four in this case study, this researcher's goal was to determine from reviewing all of the data collected whether HBCUs are still relevant, and the findings revealed that they are.

During this research, there was a lot of literature included in this study that agreed with some aspects of the data collected through the interviews of alumni and HBCU associates, as well as literature that disagreed or contradicted the collected data. Starting with Question 1, which asks whether HBCUs are still relevant, some positive literature stated that what HBCUs may lack in resources, they make up for by providing a more supportive learning environment for students, as well as faculty (Constantine, 1995). HBCUs recruit students from other races and diverse backgrounds and give all of them a sense of pride (Nealy, 2009). Not only have HBCUs been striving to improve their local neighboring communities, they have been taking their academic excellence to other countries to benefit the global community (Nealy, 2009). It has been stated that only 10 percent of black students attend HBCUs, but there are major employment prospects in the areas of physical sciences and math, and, about 40 percent of the black students who earn degrees in the physical sciences and math get them at HBCUs (Leef, 2008).

Some of the negative literature described HBCUs as academic disaster areas (Jencks & Riesman, 1967). Another article stated the best of the HBCUs are "fairly decent but hardly superb institutions" (Vedder, 2010). One economist, Thomas Sowell, stated that "Even the best black colleges and universities do not approach the standards of quality of respectable institutions" (as cited from Kimbrough, 2011; Riley, 2010). The positive information from the literature is similar to the responses from those who were

interviewed. The interviewees stated their HBCUs gave them a comfortable environment to flourish and excel. They felt that they were looked at as a person and not a number, and they received individualized attention that they probably would not have received at a non-HBCU. They enjoyed their experiences and are proud to say they attended an HBCU.

For Question 2 regarding changing or revamping and modernizing HBCU mission statements, some literature states that the missions should be changed to progress with the times. “The future of HBCUs will be determined by our contemporary relevance, not our historical significance. We have to lead and serve with a new kind of purpose, and, unless we do that and until we do that, our institutions will not become the institutions they are capable of becoming” (Abdul-Alim, 2011c, para. 14). Another article stated that for HBCUs, their “academic mission [and] intellectual legacy is another narrative that needs to be underscored” (Gray, 2011, p.141). According to the data collected from the individuals from the four HBCUs and HBCU associates, the mission statements should be modernized to reflect the changing times. Most of them have been altered to identify the changing demographics on their campuses, as well as the updated technology and course offerings, so in a sense, the literature was correct about giving the mission statements an overhaul to stay current and show how HBCUs have progressed and will continue to help their diverse or multi-cultural student body advance intellectually.

For Question 3 regarding perceptions of the HBCU brand, the literature had mixed reactions. One article stated that the public perceptions of HBCUs only helping Black students who are financially and academically inferior and other negative viewpoints that these institutions face daily are stigmas that have been viewed as subtle

ways to abolish HBCUs, in which these stigmas need to be eliminated (Williams & Ashley, 2004). Another piece of literature stated that HBCUs were “academically inferior because they reflected the cumulative inferiority of segregated education” (Clark, 1967, p. 197; LeMelle, 2002, p. 194). While another article stated that HBCUs should not receive special funding due to their race-based status, and should enroll more non-black students (Kimbrough, 2011; Vedder, 2010).

These perceptions that mention the lack of racial diversity on the campuses and the inferior education are contradictory to the data collected from those interviewed who have attended HBCUs. The racially-segregated comments are especially contradictory to HBCU2, which has a predominantly white population of 61%. The comments about academically-inferior education seems to be especially contradictory to the data collected from all of the interviewees, since all of them mentioned how their institutions produced notable and prominent people, and they could not have achieved what they did without the foundation of an HBCU education. Some of those interviewed felt that the academic programs at their universities were excellent, but there were a couple of people who had concerns about the academic program they were in. One person interviewed felt that the academic program she was in that was offered at her alma mater was great for the undergraduate students, but not as academically challenging for the graduate students. Another interviewee thought that the academic program she was a part of was great during the time she was a student, but now realizes that it lacked some aspects that would have helped her become more prepared in her field of employment. It seems that using generalized statements to reflect the racial diversity and academic standards of an HBCU cannot be justified, especially when those who have attended HBCUs have seen for

themselves how diverse or academically challenging the programs can be. Granted, not all of the programs are as academically challenging as some of the students would have liked for them to be, but it is not appropriate to discuss the problems of a few HBCUs and yet include all 105 HBCUs, when it has been revealed in the data collected that not all HBCUs are the same, especially when describing demographics and an academic curriculum.

For Question 4 regarding communication between the media and HBCUs, it was stated that for many years, HBCUs have garnered negative publicity regarding how their institutions are being managed (Wilson, 2011). Some literature states that one type of negative publicity that is true for some HBCUs should not be the only piece of information distributed (Gray, 2011). As important as it is for people to be aware of the status of colleges and universities, it is also very important to know all of the information; not just the bad, but also the good (Gray, 2011). Mr. John Silvanus Wilson, Jr., the former executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and recently appointed president of Morehouse College stated at a conference that *dignified publicity* would “set an important tone for how HBCUs would be thought of, invested in, and advanced...it is the key to accessing and tapping the philanthropic marketplace, in order to competitively strengthen capacity of these institutions” (Wilson, 2011, p. 2). Mr. Wilson also stated that HBCUs must more effectively highlight the positive aspects of what is really happening at their campuses so that they can be worthy of the dignified publicity (Wilson, 2011).

The findings from the interviewees showed that negative publicity does take place regarding HBCUs because a participant from HBCU 1 stated that she knows about

journalists coming onto her particular campus looking for negative pieces of information to publicize. The participants from HBCU 2, HBCU 3, and HBCU 4 also stated that there has been a lot of negative publicity, but a couple agreed with what Dr. Wilson said that the colleges and universities should disseminate the positive things that are happening on their campuses so that people will know what is going on and can receive positive publicity. HBCU 2's participants stated that they look at their university's website for information, and others stated they received information about their alma mater from their alumni. The literature was correct that the campuses should highlight their accomplishments for the world to know, and some of the campuses are doing exactly that.

For Question 5 regarding the need for HBCUs being reduced and requiring some to close, the literature states from one HBCU president that an

...HBCU's greatest strength is their willingness to help everyone who walks through their doors. There are countless stories from HBCU graduates who speak about not being able to afford college, but the school found a way for them to stay to complete their education. There are also stories of teachers exposing students to the possibility of attending graduate school who may not have otherwise considered it. (Dunbar, 2013, p.1)

Within this question, those who were interviewed discussed their concerns about enrollment, demographics, graduation rates, and financial support. With HBCUs receiving negative publicity about their campuses, some feel that it can hurt subsequent enrollment and funding (Nealy, 2009). In a 2004 McKinsey study, the average

graduation rate of Blacks at many HBCUs is higher than the average graduate rate of Blacks at traditionally White institutions (UNCF, 2012). Although the graduation rates for African-Americans may be higher at HBCUs, for 2011, the graduation rates after six years at HBCUs range from 79 percent at Spelman College to 10 percent at the University of the District of Columbia (“Tracking Graduation Rates at HBCUs,” 2012). Some of the literature regarding these areas suggested that there needs to be more resources for low-income students, such as funding to help them [the colleges and universities] increase their graduation rates (Kimbrough, 2011). It has been researched that 13 percent of all college graduates donate regularly to their alma maters, but Black graduates donate money far less in the single digits (Gray, 2011). HBCU alumni do not have a tradition of giving back to their alma maters (Stuart, 2012).

The interviewees from HBCU 1 and HBCU 2 were concerned about their alma maters’ enrollment because parents who are alumni are not encouraging their children to attend, and as the numbers increase, the concern seems to be more about the amount of revenue that the universities will receive instead of the quality of the students who will be attending. On the other hand, the interviewees from HBCU 3 and HBCU 4 were not as concerned about enrollment because their universities already have plans in place to increase enrollment. All of the interviewees were concerned about graduation rates and how they could be increased at their HBCUs, but as the literature continued to reflect how there is a concern about the rates being low, the interviewees were more concerned about the possible causes for the rates to be low. Some thought the rates were low due to a student’s financial issues, a student needing to work, a student having a life-changing experience, a student not taking advantage of online classes, a student needing more



nurturing, or a student not being able to handle the academic rigor of the course work.

All of these situations could prevent a student from progressing in their endeavor to graduate and extend past the four-to-six year range accounting for low graduation rates.

For Question 6 regarding individuals changing the public's perceptions of their HBCUs or HBCUs in general, some of the answers leaned toward the literature that was stated earlier under Question 5, with a small percentage of the alumni contributing to their universities. Some of the interviewees contributed a lot to their universities while others did not contribute at all. During the interview, an observation that was made by this researcher was that when the discussion turned to supporting HBCUs, about half of those interviewed stated that they currently do not do anything to help their alma maters, and they really did not think about supporting the universities until the question arose asking about their contributions. The ones who did not contribute stated that they felt bad that they had not thought about it until now, but that they should start contributing because it is important to do so. Another observation by this researcher was that those who already contributed had a list of the many ways that they support their universities. They do not just send money. They also go out into the communities, attend high school and college fairs, recruit students, participate in fundraising events, and work with businesses to try to get students jobs when they graduate. It seems that the level of support is at two extremes, either the alumni do not support at all or may only find one way to contribute, or they find multiple ways to support and encourage others to do the same.

To summarize the literature, there are many contradictory opinions that either support or do not support the relevance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The literature that supports HBCUs in several instances was confirmed by the responses of the participants in the interviews and the corresponding data. The literature and findings both confirmed that HBCUs are still relevant because they recruit students of all races and diverse backgrounds and bring them together giving them a sense of pride. They may not have access to all resources necessary for their students, but they provide a supportive learning environment in which students can thrive and excel. In addition to the four HBCUs helping the communities in which they reside, they also help communities globally.

When it came to changing the mission statements of HBCUs, the literature and interview responses both acknowledged that missions should be modernized to reflect the changing times with diversity, technology, and academic programs. The literature and findings had conflicting reviews when discussing perceptions of the HBCU brand because some literature found HBCUs to be inferior and segregated while other pieces of literature found HBCUs to be diverse, supportive, and academically challenging, as was stated during the majority of the interviews, with two individuals giving contrary opinions regarding their academic programs, but, all were pleased with the education they received from their alma maters.

The literature regarding communication between HBCUs and the media had similar overtones with the interview responses because both the literature and interviewees stated more dignified publicity should be disseminated, but at the same time, the universities should provide positive information worthy of being publicized. Graduation rates were a concern, but the literature mentioned that the rates were a problem because at HBCUs they are low, and the findings showed that the concern

should be an understanding of why they are so low. Finally, the strongest ties between the literature and the findings were with the discussion of alumni giving, and both the literature and the interviewees stated alumni do not give enough. Either alumni supports very little or none at all, or they find multiple ways to support and encourage others to support as well.

### **Implications**

With all of the literature and findings pointing towards the relevance of HBCUs, what does this mean? It means that HBCUs have a platform to use to combat those who continue to downgrade their very existence based on unfounded suppositions and some numbers without understanding the underlying reasons behind them. If one is always looking at numbers and never bothering to find out who the people are behind those numbers, then there will never be a meeting of the minds and an understanding as to why many HBCUs have been in existence for over 100 years, and continue to progress and educate diverse racial and economic groups, and why they are fighting so hard to continue to do so in the future.

If the question is asked, “Who cares?”, then the answer should be all of those students who were told that they did not have a chance to enter a college or a university based on a minimum required test score or GPA, and were turned away with nowhere else to go. Or maybe, there are those students who have heard all of their lives about the great institution of higher learning that their parents graduated from or their grandparents graduated from, and they want to be a part of that legacy. Or maybe there are those students who have never attended a school in which the majority of the students looked like them, and they wanted to feel like they belonged and wanted to be comfortable in

their environment. All of those students that I mentioned would care because the HBCUs would give them a chance when other colleges or universities may not, and they could continue a family tradition and create a legacy to share with their children in the future, as well as feel like they were a part of something great and were recognized for how special they were as a person and not seen as a number. In addition, some parents might care to know about a college or university that would help nurture their children, which would be comforting to them, if their children are interested in moving away from home to go to an institution of higher learning. There may even be some politicians who are supportive of HBCUs and are looking for information to substantiate the reason why they support the institutions and would try to convince other politicians to give support as well for funding purposes.

Some might say why should anyone bother supporting HBCUs when there are so many other choices of colleges and universities to go to? The answer to that question is why wouldn't you want to support a college or university that has lasted over 100 years educating families and continues to progress and help nurture students so that they will have the confidence to stand for themselves when it is time for them to go out into the world and make a name for themselves. Why wouldn't you want to take the time to support an institution that is trying to make a difference in the lives of others, not only locally but across the globe?

If someone asked "what's the big deal," the answer to that should be that there are too many students who need someone, or some entity, to give them a chance at a good education, and HBCUs are willing to give students a chance to prove that they can handle the academic rigor at a college or university by looking at them as a person, and not as a

number. For all of these reasons, this is why Historically Black Colleges and Universities are still relevant.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In order to continue with research on the topic of the relevance of HBCUs, there are several ways that this topic can be studied in more detail in the future by looking into different aspects of HBCUs. First, this initial study looked into the relevance of four specific HBCUs which were selected based on certain unique qualities that this researcher found interesting. Any future researcher may select any other four HBCUs based on different unique qualities that he or she may find fascinating and study those colleges or universities. In addition, this researcher identified different alumni, agencies, associations, organizations, and foundations to find individuals to interview who have some connection to HBCUs, whether directly or indirectly, in order to glean insight into what those individuals have experienced working with HBCUs, and more specifically, the four identified universities. Another researcher may decide to interview individuals who are either employees or students at selected HBCUs to gain their insights into the colleges or universities. In addition, a future researcher may want to compare certain programs that HBCUs and non-HBCUs may have in common, and compare and contrast which programs may be better or not and why. If a researcher wants to get an official statement regarding the relevance of HBCUs from a college or university, the presidents or Board members would be ideal individuals to interview for further research. Another possibility would be to change the study from qualitative to quantitative and survey individuals about other aspects of HBCUs besides mission statements, demographics, graduation rates, academic programs, accreditation, and accomplishments. An interesting

change may be to focus on HBCU graduate school programs instead of the undergraduate programs. One of my interviewees did not attend an HBCU for undergraduate school, but decided to attend for graduate school, and she had a very different perspective.

A policy recommendation may be to contact corporations here in California that may have locations in the states where HBCUs are located and partner with them to support the colleges and universities by sponsoring California students to attend those HBCUs in other states, with the understanding that during the times when the students are out of school, they would intern at those corporations either in the state of the HBCU or California, and upon graduation, those students would have jobs waiting for them with the corporation that sponsored them to get their education. The student benefits because they are getting an education from an HBCU and a job when they graduate, and the corporation benefits because they can support a student going to college and an HBCU and will ultimately have an employee who has already been trained to work for them. This partnership could be a continuous source of funding of scholarships for students and future employees for the corporations.

A practitioner recommendation could focus on alumni giving. The literature and research findings showed that support from alumni is very low at HBCUs, and because of that, some colleges and universities struggle to provide necessary resources for their students. Since a couple of the interviewees mentioned that they know they need to do a better job at supporting their alma maters, but they do not know exactly what the departments, colleges, or the university in general needs, maybe a good way for the HBCUs to ask for support would be for each department to target students who graduated from their department or program and ask them for specific items or ask for donations to

purchase specific items to help the students in that particular department or program.

This way, the departments are able to target possible sources of support, and the alumni are able to focus their efforts on helping to support that department knowing that their support is going to a specific department to help for a pre-determined cause.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are still relevant. In order to make this determination, this researcher began by studying the history of HBCUs, how they were created, how they grew in numbers, how they have progressed in terms of academic programs, and how their leaders see these institutions progressing in the future. From the inception of HBCUs, there has been conflicting literature regarding the relevance of these institutions of higher learning. Using the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, and the premise that HBCUs were established to educate Black students, as well as promote social justice, champion anti-subordination, and end racial suppression, the findings from data collected in documents and from interviews have suggested that HBCUs are still relevant, especially to those who have attended these institutions. Because of the supportive learning environment that embraces students of all races encouraging the pursuit of excellence and rejecting racial suppression and the stigmas of inferiority, many HBCUs have progressed into thriving institutions that continue to educate students despite the negative perceptions. During this research process, it was determined that as much as these colleges and universities have benefitted students over the decades, there are those who do not believe the need for them still exists, which brings us to the research question of whether HBCUs are still relevant.

It is known that there are 105 HBCUs throughout the United States and in the Virgin Islands, and they are only 3-4% of all colleges and universities in the United States. The majority are located in the Southern, Eastern, and Northern areas of the United States with none on the West Coast. In general, they have high freshman acceptance rates but low graduation rates. The reason why they were created in the mid-1800s was so that African-American students could be educated. Over time, non-HBCUs have begun to accept African-American students at their institutions, so many politicians, economists, and educators question why they are still needed.

For this study, this researcher used a qualitative case study to examine four specific HBCUs to determine whether they are still relevant. Through purposeful sampling, 12 people were selected to participate in the interview process in which several questions were asked discussing HBCU relevance, possible changes of mission statements, perceptions of the HBCU brand, communication between HBCUs and the media, possible concerns regarding the need to keep HBCUs open or close them, and asking individuals how they change public perceptions about HBCUs and support their alma maters. All of these questions were asked to determine relevance using the criteria of mission statements, demographics, graduation rates, accreditation, academic programs, and accomplishments. There were limitations in the sampling of those who were asked to be interviewed because university employees could possibly have a bias towards the university that they work for and would want to give more positive answers to the questions, instead of more real and in-depth answers so that people reading this could get a clear understanding of what really happens on an HBCU campus. By selecting alumni



from the HBCUs for the interviews, they were able to give more in-depth answers, which may or may not have been positive, but they were real and they were honest.

After the interviews, the findings, data, and literature revealed that HBCUs, or more specifically the four HBCUs that were targeted for the study, are still relevant because their mission statements fully explain that they serve a racially and economically diverse student body focusing on nurturing students and giving them the chance to excel in a comfortable learning environment with rigorous and challenging academic programs that are geared to prepare students to enter the workforce and succeed. The perceptions about HBCUs are mostly based on suppositions and some numbers that reflect the communities that they are a part of, and other numbers which seem to be more of a concern as to the fact that they are low with little or no research into why they may be so low. The media has been less than kind for the most part when it comes to promoting the four HBCUs, but at the same time, the HBCUs need to be proactive and disseminate positive information as well to inform their communities, including their alumni, which could encourage more alumni to support their alma maters. Even though HBCUs, and specifically the four that were the focus, still have some work to do to stay progressive and provide for their students, it would be helpful if the alumni would begin to support their HBCUs on a more regular basis to generate funds to continue to help the students and their communities because the need to educate is still there not just for African-American students, but for all students.

Because Historically Black Colleges and Universities are still relevant and still needed in their communities locally and globally, it would be wonderful if more alumni supported their alma maters financially and encouraged their children to attend. It would

also be economically beneficial for corporations to invest in students who plan to attend HBCUs by providing scholarships and job opportunities showing good will to the communities in which the HBCUs are located and where they have their businesses. It would also be helpful if politicians would focus on the positive contributions that HBCUs continue to make in their communities instead of looking for the negative aspects and reasons to merge them with other HBCUs, merge them with non-HBCUs, or close them down. Historically Black Colleges and Universities have lasted for over 100 years with the purpose of educating students. They should be able to continue to educate students for at least another 100 years so that students in the future will be able to benefit from a nurturing, yet challenging educational environment, while making friends and connections that will last them a lifetime.

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## APPENDIX A

## Listing of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Table A1

*Listing of Historically Black Colleges and Universities*

State		College or University Name	Accredited as of 2011
Alabama	1.	Alabama A&M University	Yes
	2.	Alabama State University	Yes
	3.	Bishop State Community College	Yes
	4.	Concordia College	Yes
	5.	C.A. Fredd Campus of Shelton State Community College	Yes
	6.	Gadsden State Community College	Yes
	7.	Lawson State Community College	Yes
	8.	Miles College	Yes
	9.	Oakwood University	Yes
	10.	Selma University	Yes
	11.	J.F. Drake Technical College	Yes
	12.	Stillman College	Yes
	13.	Talladega College	Yes
	14.	Trenholm State Technical College	Yes
	15.	Tuskegee University	Yes
Arkansas	16.	Arkansas Baptist College	Yes
	17.	Philander Smith College	Yes
	18.	Shorter College <sup>a</sup>	
	19.	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	Yes
Delaware	20.	Delaware State University	Yes
District of Columbia	21.	Howard University	Yes
	22.	University of the District of Columbia	Yes
Florida	23.	Bethune-Cookman University	Yes
	24.	Edward Waters College	Yes
	25.	Florida A&M University	Yes
	26.	Florida Memorial College	Yes
Georgia	27.	Albany State University	Yes
	28.	Clark Atlanta University	Yes
	29.	Fort Valley State University	Yes
	30.	Interdenominational Theological Center	Yes
	31.	Morehouse College	Yes
	32.	Morehouse School of Medicine	Yes
	33.	Morris Brown College <sup>a</sup>	

(continued)

State		College or University Name	Accredited as of 2011
Georgia	34.	Paine College	Yes
	35.	Savannah State University	Yes
	36.	Spelman College	Yes
Kentucky	37.	Kentucky State University	Yes
Louisiana	38.	Dillard University	Yes
	39.	Grambling State University	Yes
	40.	Southern University and A&M College	Yes
	41.	Southern University of New Orleans	Yes
	42.	Southern University at Shreveport	Yes
	43.	Xavier University of New Orleans	Yes
Maryland	44.	Bowie State University	Yes
	45.	Coppin State College	Yes
	46.	Morgan State University	Yes
	47.	University of Maryland Eastern Shore	Yes
Michigan	48.	Lewis College of Business <sup>a</sup>	
Mississippi	49.	Alcorn State University	Yes
	50.	Coahoma Community College	Yes
	51.	Hinds Community College	Yes
	52.	Jackson State University	Yes
	53.	Mississippi Valley State University	Yes
	54.	Rust College	Yes
	55.	Tougaloo College	Yes
Missouri	56.	Harris-Stowe State University	Yes
	57.	Lincoln University	Yes
North Carolina	58.	Barber-Scotia College <sup>a</sup>	
	59.	Bennett College	Yes
	60.	Elizabeth City State University	Yes
	61.	Fayetteville State University	Yes
	62.	Johnson C. Smith University	Yes
	63.	Livingstone College	Yes
	64.	North Carolina A&T State University	Yes
	65.	North Carolina Central University	Yes
	66.	St. Augustine's College	Yes
	67.	Shaw University	Yes
	68.	Winston-Salem State University	Yes
Ohio	69.	Central State University	Yes
	70.	Wilberforce University	Yes
Oklahoma	71.	Langston University	Yes
Pennsylvania	72.	Cheyney University of Pennsylvania	Yes
	73.	Lincoln University	Yes

(continued)

State		College or University Name	Accredited as of 2011
South Carolina	74.	Allen University	Yes
	75.	Benedict College	Yes
	76.	Claflin University	Yes
	77.	Clinton Junior College	Yes
	78.	Denmark Technical College	Yes
	79.	Morris College	Yes
	80.	South Carolina State University	Yes
	81.	Voorhees College	Yes
Tennessee	82.	Fisk University	Yes
	83.	Knoxville College <sup>a</sup>	
	84.	Lane College	Yes
	85.	LeMoyne-Owens College	Yes
	86.	Meharry Medical College	Yes
	87.	Tennessee State University	Yes
	88.	Huston-Tillotson University	Yes
Texas	89.	Jarvis Christian College	Yes
	90.	Paul Quinn College	Yes
	91.	Prairie View A&M University	Yes
	92.	Saint Philip's College	Yes
	93.	Southwestern Christian College	Yes
	94.	Texas College	Yes
	95.	Texas Southern University	Yes
	96.	Wiley College	Yes
Virginia	97.	Hampton University	Yes
	98.	Norfolk State University	Yes
	99.	Saint Paul's College <sup>b</sup>	Yes
	100.	Virginia State University	Yes
	101.	Virginia Union University	Yes
	102.	Virginia University of Lynchburg	Yes
West Virginia	103.	Bluefield State College	Yes
	104.	West Virginia State University	Yes
U.S. Virgin Islands	105.	University of the Virgin Islands	Yes

*Note.* The combined listing of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their accreditation status was created from information found in the United States Department of Education complete listing of HBCUs and accreditation status (USDOE, 2013).

<sup>a</sup>The blackened spaces are indicators of colleges or universities that are not accredited according to the United States Department of Education's White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (USDOE, 2013). <sup>b</sup>Saint Paul's College is scheduled to close on June 30, 2013 according to a letter received by the college's regional accrediting body (Hawkins, 2013).

## APPENDIX B

## Informed Consent Form

I authorize Renee Felicia Dorn, JD,MBA, a doctoral candidate, and student principal investigator for this research project, under the supervision of Dr. James R. DellaNeve in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University, to include me in the research project entitled “The Relevance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities”. I understand that this project is research being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the investigator’s dissertation and doctoral program.

I understand my participation in this study is strictly voluntary. I have been asked to participate in a research project in which the purpose is to examine the relevance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities by reviewing the missions, demographics, academic programs, graduation rates, accreditations, and accomplishments of one or more Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The study will require no more than three meetings of approximately 45 minutes to one hour each. I have been asked to participate in this study because I have personal experience working with one or more Historically Black Colleges or Universities. I will be asked to answer questions regarding my experience and knowledge working with Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

I understand that I will be audiotaped if I decide to participate in this study. The tapes will be used for research purposes only. The tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet, maintained by the researcher, and will be destroyed five years after the study is completed.

The potential risks of participating in this study are minimal such as the amount of time involved taken away from your daily responsibilities and possible fatigue or boredom, and in the event that I do experience such, a rest break will be provided.

I understand there is no direct benefit from participation in this study; however, the social science benefit(s) to the academic community, as well as the general public, may include knowledge and information about Historically Black Colleges and Universities from my experience and leadership perspective. This will add to the body of knowledge about this subject.

I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from, the study at any time without prejudice. I also have the right to refuse to answer any question I choose not to answer. I also understand that there might be times that the investigator may find it necessary to end my study participation.



I understand that no information gathered from my study participation will be released to others without my permission, unless such a disclosure is required by law. I further understand my confidentiality will be maintained by use of non-personal identifiers and if the findings of the study are published or presented to a professional audience, no personally identifying information will be released. The data gathered will be stored in locked file cabinets to which only the investigator will have access.

Information gathered may be made available to other investigators with whom the investigator may collaborate with in future research. If such collaborations occur, the data will be released without any personally identifying information so that I cannot be identified, and the use of the data will be supervised by the investigator. The raw data will be maintained in a secure manner for 5 years at which time the data will be destroyed. I understand I will receive no compensation, financial or otherwise, for participating in this study.

I understand that if I have any questions regarding the study procedures, I can contact Renee Felicia Dorn at [REDACTED]. If I have further questions, I may also contact Dr. James DellaNeve, the Faculty Supervisor, at [REDACTED]. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact Dr. Doug Leigh, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional School Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University, at [REDACTED].

I understand to my satisfaction the information in this consent form regarding my participation in this research project. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

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Participant's Name - printed

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Participant's Signature

---

Date

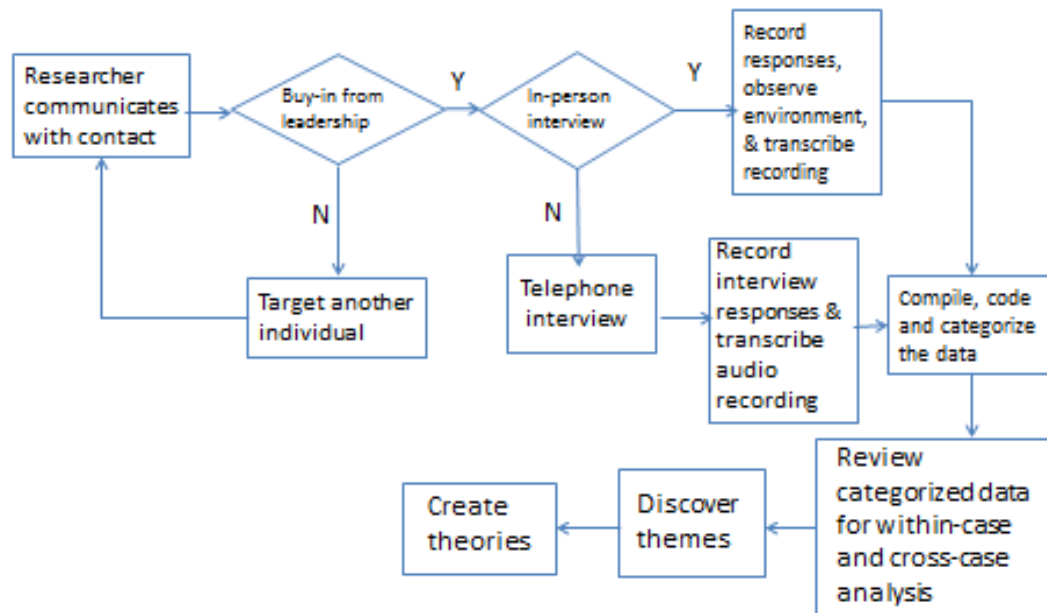
## APPENDIX C

## Interview Questions

1. Are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) still relevant and why?
2. Does the mission for your particular HBCU (or HBCUs in general) need to be completely changed or revamped and modernized?
3. What are the perceptions of the HBCU brand for your particular HBCU (or HBCUs in general)?
  - Demographics
  - Academics/curriculum
  - Intellectual ability of students
  - Financial stability of students
  - Financial support from individuals, corporations, foundations, and alumni
  - Low graduation rates
  - Accreditation issues
4. Has the communication between your HBCU (or HBCUs in general) and the media been adequate to effectively publicize HBCU accomplishments?
  - What are some of the major accomplishments at your HBCU (or HBCUs in general)
  - What are some of the significant programs at your HBCU (or HBCUs in general) that employers look for or are impressed with
  - What is the accreditation status for your colleges/departments
5. According to the statistical information regarding your university (or HBCUs in general), do you have any concerns about the areas of:
  - Enrollment
  - Demographics
  - Graduation rates
  - Financial support for the university and/or certain departments
6. Has the need for HBCUs been reduced so that some of the existing institutions should close?
7. What are you as a leader or representative of your HBCU (or HBCUs in general) doing to change the public's perceptions as to the relevance of this (these) learning institution(s)?

## APPENDIX D

Data Collection and Analysis Process to  
Target Potential Interviewees and Collect and Analyze Data



*Figure D1.* Data collection and analysis process to target potential interviewees and collect and analyze data.